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THE FLASH OF AN EMERALD

By Ethel Watts Mumford

PROLOGUE

THE July sun blazed unrelentingly on the wide, hard-baked road that led, straight as a giant ruler, across the forlorn level country. Gorse and stubble, ground-pine and intensely green, wiry broom covered the moors, from which a quivering radiance of steaming heat mounted to the molten sky; the horizon shook with it, and the distant dome of the basilica of St. Anne of Auray, with its golden statue, wavered upward like a white flame.

It was St. Anne's Eve, and the incoming human tide was near its flood. The following day would bring the great feast, when the cure-working statue would be carried in procession. The throng pushed forward in anticipation. Here were dilapidated diligences, called into service by the influx of visitors; carts, drays, carriages of all ages and previous conditions of servitude; heavy, high-swinging landaus with emblazoned panels, bringing the châtelaines of the neighborhood; even the pumping, banging, petroleum automobiles that all fashionable France had then gone mad over. And mixed in and about the carriage-pilgrims came the rank and file of footfarers, men from Belz, with white trousers and coats of peacock-blue; women of Lorient, in the dress made famous by the *chocolatière* of Dresden; peasants of Pont-Aven, in their pleated collars and wide-winged headdress; deputations from Morlaix, wearing the fifteenth-century "hénin" in all its glory; women of Pont-l'Abbé, broad-shouldered and

square-hipped, marching through the heat in their multitudinous black cloth skirts and yellow embroidered jackets. And in all alike, men, women and children, the deep, contained fire of fanatic faith.

An ancient and dilapidated vehicle of the vintage of the First Empire, driven by a pompous peasant of Auray in full regalia, swung from side to side in the jostling mass like a distressed ship in a human sea. Reclining on the threadbare velvet cushions, four girls of obviously foreign extraction volleyed with assorted cameras on the crowd about them. Many shrank from the black boxes in fear of witchcraft, but others, more experienced in the ways of strangers, grinned broadly or became suddenly petrified into awkwardness. But from their coign of vantage the cameras continued to snap with regardless vehemence.

Of the four, Victoria Claudel was, perhaps, the most noticeable. As she often said of herself, she was made up of odds and ends. Her small, well-shaped head was set on a full, strong throat. She had very wide shoulders, a tremendous depth of chest, suggestive of great vitality, feet unusually small, and well-formed hands, unexpectedly large. The face that shone out from the shade of a battered campaign hat showed the same irregularity—a short, straight nose, large, oblique gray eyes, and a small, dainty mouth in a strong jaw. The forehead was somewhat high, and from it sprang a great mass of red-black hair. She was not beautiful, but far more than pretty. Vitality, power, vigorous impatience and ingrained

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humor seemed to surround her as an atmosphere rings its planet.

Victoria put down her camera and distributed a handful of coppers among the pilgrim subjects.

"Give me change for a franc," the red-haired Sonia Palintzka begged.

"Can't do it," Victoria returned. "Change it when you get to the hotel. I believe you are a reincarnation of Judas—I never knew you when you weren't trying to change your thirty pieces of silver."

Shorty fell over her companions in her haste. "Oh, look! See those peasants with the apple-green sleeves and the blue bodices. Heavens! he's going to run them down, and they are so beautiful!"

The older woman disengaged herself from the tangle of Shorty's skirts. "You are perfectly insane, child; do sit still! You've taken at least four pictures without winding one off."

The girl gasped, "Oh, I believe you're right! Oh, dear! my beggars will be spoiled."

Their carriage halted for a moment. A balky horse somewhere in the crowd ahead was determinedly holding back the procession. The crush had moved them alongside a well-appointed green-bodied brougham, from the window of which a slim woman, dressed in mourning, was anxiously leaning.

"It must be horribly dark inside the lady," murmured Victoria, in an undertone; "see how the blackness pours out of her!"

Sonia nodded, the description was so apt. Great, troubled, black eyes lighted up the woman's haggard face; bushy brows almost met over the thin, high-bred nose; hair so intensely black that the widow's cap surmounting it seemed lighter by comparison; even her skin was seared as if by fire, yellow-brown as it met the raven locks, like burned parchment. All this darkness seemed to emanate from the eyes—two tunnels of Erebus that led inward to depths incalculable.

Conscious of scrutiny, the lady raised her head. The anxiety of her face froze to haughty annoyance, and

she withdrew from the window abruptly.

"Snapping turtle!" Shorty remarked.

Victoria smiled. "Did look that way. See the child with her—she's ill. I suppose they are bringing her to St. Anne."

A fair-haired girl, dressed in black and thin to emaciation, lay in the other corner of the carriage. Her little feet rested on the lap of a maid who sat opposite, holding a smelling bottle in one hand. As if in obedience to a command the servant leaned forward and sharply drew down the green silk window-shade, darting, as she did so, a look of unconcealed scorn at Sonia's unaffectedly interested face.

"End of Act I.—curtain!" said Victoria.

A sway and jar in the packed roadway announced that at last progress was possible. The interrupted tramp of the march again began. Somewhere in the front a chorus of men's voices intoned the ancient Breton chant of St. Anne. It spread from rank to rank, as fire whips across a prairie, till the whole throng rocked with it—an immense emotional swell.

Victoria's face paled a little, and she shook her shoulders as if to throw off the hysterical contagion of the crowd.

Sonia looked sympathy. "Grips one right by the throat, doesn't it?"

There was no more stopping now. The procession in its compact thousands advanced as if lifted bodily. The weary straightened themselves, the sick lifted their heads, the eyes of the dying lighted once more.

"Makes one understand the Crusades," Shorty murmured, tearfully.

The resistless stream poured on to its destination, spreading out as it reached the vast paved square in front of the church and the green acres before the Scala Santa. The Empire chaise with its modern occupants drew up before the door of the largest inn, facing directly on the place. It was preceded by the green-bodied brougham, from which the maid, as-

sisted by the landlord, was lifting the invalid. The deference with which the party was treated marked them as people of importance, and Victoria wisely concealed her impatience till their illustrious wants should be ministered to.

"We engaged our rooms weeks ago, so we're all right, you know," she said; "and they'll treat us better if we don't fluster them in handling their grandees. Suppose we sit out here at one of the little tables till the coast is clear."

Settling themselves, they eagerly watched the crowd that wove its brilliant patterns before them.

"Jolly, isn't it?" Shorty commented. "We are the only rank outsiders. Evidently the great American tourists haven't discovered this yet."

"Give them time. They will—sooner or later," Miss Bently announced, sadly. "To-morrow there will be more—that man over there, for instance; he's an Englishman, I'll wager a franc."

"Done!" and Victoria held out her hand. "No Englishman would be so fearfully and wonderfully British."

"I don't see how we're to find out," said Shorty, wistfully.

"He's going into the hotel—we'll ask the chambermaid what room he has, and look it up on the register."

"But," objected the Russian, "there won't be what you call a register here, only those miserable little slips you have to make out and hand to the landlord—how old you are, and where you were born, and what for, and who filled your teeth, and where you think you'll go when you die, and all sorts of little personalities that might interest the police."

Their entrance to the inn in their turn brought sorrow. The landlord remembered perfectly the correspondence with the young ladies, but what was he to do? Madame de Vernon Château-Lamion had just arrived, bringing her little daughter to the good St. Anne. She had required the best rooms—as he said before, what could he do? It was vexatious; but the child was ill, very ill.

Sonia flushed and drew herself up. It was at such moments that she gave ground for the suspicion current in the artistic circles she frequented, that concealed under her simple incognita was a name as illustrious as the Orloffs' own. "My good man," she articulated, as she quenched the fire of his eloquence by an icy glance, "you are under contract to accommodate us. If the child is ill, we will not insist on our rights; but accommodate us you must, somewhere. You know perfectly well the conditions here during the feast. We have no intention of sleeping in the square with the peasants, or doing the Stations of the Cross on our knees all night in the church. Now, what are you going to do?"

The landlord looked up at her stately height, at the gold glory of her hair, at the violet fire of her eyes—and wilted.

Madame—mademoiselle must pardon. It was unfortunate, but perhaps if the ladies would be graciously lenient—there were—rooms—oh, not the kind he wished he might provide—but rooms, one in the wing, where two of *ces dames* could stay, and one—he hesitated, and fairly gasped—over the—stable!

Sonia's manner was magnificent. As a queen might condescend to accept a lowly state that humbler subjects caviled at, because, being queen, she dignified whatever lodging she deigned to honor, she inclined her head. "Take us there," she said, "and let Madame de Vernon Château-Lamion know that because of the illness of her child we will permit her to occupy our apartments."

The fat little landlord gulped, and humbly led the way to the dingy hospitality he offered.

"Too bad we can't be together!" Shorty wailed, as she inspected the cubby-hole in the wing.

Once more the host, by this time reduced to positive pathos, clamored his excuses.

Sonia silenced him. "This lady," indicating Victoria, "and I will occupy the stable." Again they jour-

neyed through a labyrinth of passages to the much-scorned chamber, which proved to be better than its promise. It was, at least, clean and roomy, and the two little hospital cots looked comfortable enough. Its simple dormer window commanded an uninspiring view of courtyard and barn, the slope of the roof being not so great but one might step out on it with safety, or, in case of necessity, slip across to the iron ladder that posed as fire-escape for that part of the hotel buildings adjoining the lofts. This much the American girl's hasty inspection took in as she put down her simple baggage. Sonia, glancing through the dim window glass, commented on the ease with which one might cross from one part of the house to another by judicious use of water pipes and roofs. "It is to be hoped," she concluded, "that pilgrims are uniformly pious, otherwise a burglar would have what you call a picnic in this house."

Victoria, deep in tepid ablutions, sputtered something about willingly parting with everything but her kodak films; but Sonia persisted:

"These are servants' quarters, or hostlers'. I don't think it is right to put such people in a room like this, which has window communication with every back room in the house—yes, and probably every front one, too, for one would have only to cross the roof and use the balconies."

"Oh, come, trust a Breton hostler—he hasn't imagination enough to think of anything so complicated, and unless, Sonia, you are contemplating a little burglarious expedition, we're safe enough."

Victoria wiped her hands on the diminutive towel, twisted her short skirt straight, stuffed in a handful of strong hairpins, and announced her intention of going out. Her companion slowly left the window, went through the same feminine recipe for "straightening up," and patted her friend's shoulder with impulsive irrelevance.

"Vic, you're a nice girl. I wish you would come to Russia with me

this Winter, instead of going back to America."

Her friend smiled. "Wish I could, Sonia, but I've got to go—there's no getting out of it. It's business, you see. There will be a settling of the estate—Bob comes of age."

Sonia locked the door as they went out into the cheerless corridor that smelled not unpleasantly of hay and fodder. "Well, perhaps I'll come to America instead. I've always wanted to see what it is like."

"If you do, Sonia, I'll give you the best time you ever had in all your life. As a country—well, I don't like to be unpatriotic—you'll be disappointed; but the people make up for it—they are the whitest in the world," and Victoria's gray eyes looked unutterable admiration into space.

They reached the staircase after much wandering and descended to the floor below, turned toward the main entrance and came face to face with the plaided, knickerbockered young man whose back had attracted their comment. Victoria, because of her bet, favored the stranger with a long, comprehensive stare as he passed. He was undeniably handsome, with fine, regular features, yellow hair concealed by a gray cap, very black eyes and eyebrows that contrasted strangely with his light moustache. He walked gracefully, in spite of a slight limp.

"He is English," Sonia asserted, when well out of earshot.

Victoria shook her head. "I don't think so. I'm sure I don't know why, but I don't."

The Lorient-coifed chambermaid appeared, burdened with towels and full of business. Victoria confronted her. "Do you know who the young man is who just went up-stairs? He looks like someone I know, but I can't be sure."

"Oh, yes—fifty-seven." The woman patted the towels gently, as if struggling to remember among the press of patrons. "Fifty-seven—fifty-seven—came yesterday—had a headache, and his dinner in his room. I think he went out a while ago,

but he didn't stay long. Seems to be expecting somebody, from the way he sits by the window. English?—of course. You should hear him speak French!" She laughed. "His name? I don't know—oh, yes, his bag has 'J. O'Farrell' marked on it; it's a cheap bag," and with this information she proceeded on her way.

"That settles it—you've lost," said Sonia.

"I suppose I have." Victoria's tone was puzzled and unconvinced.

As they emerged into the street Shorty pounced on them. "Come quick! There's a whole band of women from Faouët going to have their sickles blessed. Oh, it's too bad the light is going, I can't get a picture! It's fine, it's wonderful!"

Miss Bently's flat, brown figure frantically beckoned them to hasten, and the three ran forward to the stone wall on which she stood, commanding a view of the church doors over the swaying heads of the crowd.

"Oh," Victoria spoke up, "I lost the bet, Boston, my love. We asked the chambermaid about the man you thought was English. It seems his name is O'Farrell, and he speaks very bad French, so I suppose that settles it; but—" and she shook her head—"somehow it doesn't go; maybe he's half-and-half—perhaps his mother was French, or Italian, or something. I flatter myself I'm a good guesser, and certainly he does not spell 'English' to me."

"Oh, you're too sharp!" Shorty laughed, as they returned to the hotel entrance.

They had hardly crossed the threshold when they became aware of the advancing presence of the swarthy Madame de Vernon Château-Lamion. With a well-bred haughtiness she inclined her dark head, and addressed herself directly to Sonia, including Victoria in the same glance. Boston and Shorty she ignored magnificently, turning as if by instinct to her social equals.

"I am informed that I am indebted to you ladies for the suite I now occupy. I assure you that were it not

for my daughter's critical condition I should at once seek lodgings elsewhere. As it is, I must, most unwillingly, impose upon your kindness."

"Madame," returned Victoria, "we are glad to contribute to your daughter's comfort."

"We trust," added Sonia, with unexpected gentleness, "that your prayers for her may be heard."

The mother crossed herself. "May God so will! My thanks," she added, with a return of her frigid politeness; and with another slight bow she left them.

"What a very aristocratic old black-bird," remarked Shorty, after a pause, piqued that her blond prettiness had attracted no acknowledgment of her existence from the gaunt countess.

"Yes," Sonia gravely assented; "she has blue blood, as you say."

"I don't say anything of the sort," Miss Bently sharply objected. "I should, from her appearance, suggest jet-black ink, or stove polish."

Though early, the dining-room was already crowded, which necessitated an irritating wait, but the four were at last settled at a small table, and the conversation returned to the countess.

"Did you see the lace she wore? Antique Venetian, and a gem of a piece." Victoria spoke with a sort of detached envy.

Sonia nodded. "Yes; but what made me want to break the commandment about envy was her pin. Did you notice it?"

"Rather!" and Victoria's face lighted with appreciation. "What was it? I never saw anything like it."

"Nor I," continued Sonia, "though I've seen—" here she checked herself, and added, lamely, "a great deal. It was sixteenth century, I am certain. Those pendants were unmistakable; and I think I never saw such an emerald—the size, the color!"

"It had a big flaw right in the middle, though," and Victoria took up the description. "It was the marvelous delicacy of the setting and the design that struck me. I don't believe its intrinsic value is so great, even with

the emerald; but the art of it, the art of it! It makes the modern work seem absolute pot-boiling; there were old masters in jewelry as well as in paint."

"I think," Sonia continued, "the two gold dolphins that surround the centre stone must have been heraldic. I believe it was a sort of acrostic of a coat-of-arms. I've seen such pieces in Russia, and I know they were used in Spain."

"Oh, stop talking like a pair of antiquaries," Shorty interrupted. "You don't know anything about it, and you're missing the circus. Just look at the freaks in this *salle à manger*."

"I don't see my Englishman," Miss Bently observed.

"Evidently his headache has come on again, and he's having his supper in his room. The chambermaid said he hadn't been well," Sonia explained.

The meal dragged on indefinitely, the frantic serving wenches vainly trying to cope with the number of their charges. Every dish was cold or poor. Soup arrived after the meat, and vegetables with the pudding. But there was little objection. Everyone was either too devout or too interested to trouble about food for the time being. The four dissimilar girls were probably as much of an incongruity as the other guests or the distorted meal. Theirs was one of those oddly combined friendships, evolved in studios, with which all dwellers in France have become familiar. At the bottom there is always the stratum of common ambitions, appreciation and bohemianism, in spite of unbridgeable divergences in character and traditions.

Just now the four were equally delighted—Miss Bently and Sonia with the paintable qualities of the pilgrimage, Shorty with the photographic possibilities, and Victoria with the human passion of excitement and faith that ran riot in and about her. Although her training had been in the field of applied art, she was slowly but certainly turning toward the alluring fields of literature, her short ex-

perience with newspaper work having bred ambitions. Now, unconsciously, she groped for words with which to translate the pictures and the emotions of the hour, and went about with sentences speaking themselves in her head—so good sometimes that she longed to jot them down, yet never quite dared because of a curious self-consciousness that made her hate to explain what she was doing to her companions. "Hysteria, the most instantly contagious of diseases," she caught herself murmuring, as, supper finished, they again sought the square and its picturesque gatherings. "I wonder if it is possible for anyone in his senses to remain unmoved by such an immense and intensely human cry of faith—the faith of children, and catered to as to children." What marvelous charm was in the lights, the incense, the fountain of healing, the fairy-tale statue discovered, though buried, because of the great radiance that shone over the spot! What mattered it that antiquarians have pronounced it to be a Venus, relic of the Roman occupation? Converted into St. Anne, recarved—and no saint in Christendom is more efficacious to cure—"as bread pills cure a child," she concluded, aloud.

Surprised to hear her own voice, she looked up. She had become separated from her friends, and had somehow drifted to the church door. Impulsively she entered, and knelt for a moment the better to take in the mystery of the great building, whose mighty pillars sprang straight as giant jets of water and spread across the arched ceiling in a spray of lacy stone. The lights were dim; but below, by the great white altar, in the side chapels and at each pillar's foot, thousands on thousands of candles sent up a radiance mellowed and softened in the immensity of the nave.

The darkness of confessionals and recessed chapels was gemmed with colored lamps, that vaguely showed the lines of waiting penitents. The place reeked with incense, the odor of melted wax and the vague heaviness of crowded human breaths.

The subdued shuffling of feet and the audible heart-throbs of prayer shook the air. She was glad to be here, to throw herself into the immensity of this sea of faith—herself unbelieving. Only by an effort could she free herself from the mocking of her judgment, and she yearned now to experience the exaltation of the least of these sun-tanned, ignorant tillers of the soil.

The waiting seemed endless in the crowded night, filled with snatches of hymns and songs. All was swaying life and excited unrest except the quiet, unmoved stars overhead. Then the vast, illuminated procession heaved under way. Once more the great chant that had brought the pilgrims to their journey's end, in the afternoon, burst forth, both from the candle-bearers and the dense black human hedge that lined the route.

The high nasal tenor of a priest's voice intoned alone for a moment; then the responses broke from the multitude with the roar of breaking surf. Again the tenor of the priest; again the deep-growling bass of the crowd. The chimes rang out—paused—and the single bourdon throbbed the hour. Victoria, to her amazement, counted twelve. Where had the time gone? It seemed hardly an hour since she had slipped into the church. There was no apparent diminution of the crowd, and the enthusiasm continued at white heat. She became suddenly conscious that she was weary and footsore. Her excited nerves relaxed almost to the crying point. It was as if the stroke of midnight had destroyed the enchantment.

Too tired to take any further interest in her surroundings, Victoria's feet and thoughts turned gratefully hotelward. The narrow cot at her journey's end suddenly absorbed all her ambitions and hopes. With lagging steps she made her way out of the cloisters and wearily crossed the square, still vaguely filled with rumor—a ghostly reminiscence of the day's tumult. When she reached the hotel office it was deserted; everyone was

out of doors, apparently. She found a candle and dragged herself up the long, winding stairs and through the dark passages, guided by instinct and the smell of hay, to the little corridor connecting the main building with the lofts. Her room door gave as she touched it, but no light shone from within, and suddenly Sonia, her hair falling about her ears, her eyes wide with excitement, stood before her. Only an instant the vision lasted; her candle was extinguished and Sonia's voice gave warning, in a whisper:

"Be quiet! Somebody is coming over the roofs!"

In the darkness of the room the two girls stood listening. The noise of bells in the square came vaguely to them. But distinct, though muffled, rasped the sound of someone walking cautiously over the tiles. Softly the girls crept to the window, and standing well back, could make out the top of the fire-escape leading to the courtyard.

The cautious tread ceased, and was followed by a slight scraping and shuffling as of someone crawling. Victoria, with sudden inspiration, recalled a clothes-press in the wall near which she crouched. She felt for Sonia's hand in the darkness, secured the extinguished candle, cautiously opened the closet door, and entered, closing it behind her. Hurriedly she struck a light, then putting down the candle, as quickly slipped into the room once more.

"It's ready when we want it. I closed the door so he couldn't see the light or hear the match."

A soft pressure of Sonia's hand answered her.

The scuffling noise continued, so slight that had they not been on their guard it must have passed unnoticed.

Another telegraphic squeeze passed between them as the dark bulk of a man's body and head loomed just above the iron ladder.

A pause, in which the girls held their breaths and listened to the beating of their hearts as to the thump of

engines. The man looked down, listened, swung his legs clear, and placed his feet on the fire-escape.

"Now!" cried Sonia, careless of noise, only anxious for swiftness. Opening the closet, she snatched up the light and leaned out as she raised it high above her head. "Who's there?" Her voice rang sharp and loud.

The light fell full on the startled face of the man—a handsome face, whose yellow hair and contrasting black eyes were unmistakable.

"The Englishman!" whispered Victoria.

For an instant fear shone in his eyes—then, almost at once, his face cleared to a charming smile.

"Don't be frightened," he said softly, in very bad French; "it is nothing. My friend amused himself by locking me in my room, for a joke, so I crawled out on the balcony and over the roofs to get even with him. Don't wake up the house. I'm awfully sorry I frightened you." He nodded pleasantly and disappeared over the gutter's edge into the darkness below.

They heard him reach the courtyard; they heard his footsteps cross the court, and the lift of the latch as he let himself into the street by the stable gate. The girls stared at each other in silence; then Sonia laughed.

"That's a joke on us, as you say, but it has frightened sleep from me for the rest of the night."

Victoria crossed to the table, took up one of her Russian friend's cigarettes, lighted it, and began to walk the floor.

Pausing abruptly before her companion, she inquired, sharply, "What did he want with a camera at night?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. Did he have one?"

"Yes, I saw it—a five-by-eight, I should say—in its black leather case, slung over his shoulder."

"Flash-light," suggested Sonia.

Victoria shook her head. "Aren't the odd numbers on this side of the hall?"

Sonia nodded in bewilderment.

"Then why did he say he climbed out on the balcony? The balcony is on the front, and the chambermaid said fifty-seven!"

"She may have made a mistake."

"He's not an Englishman."

"He never said he was."

"I know; but he's dressing the part, and has overdone it."

"Well?"

Victoria frowned and threw the cigarette out of the open window with unnecessary energy. "Sonia," she said, gravely, "you know I am going back to America in November. My passage is taken. The estate must be settled. I can't put it off. Now if I take this thing up it may mean endless trouble for me and legal complications. Sonia, you have to do it. Go down-stairs and find out if that man's story is true. Rouse somebody—everybody—but find out! Leave me out of it when you tell your story. Go on; there is no time to lose. I'll meet you down-stairs as if I had just come in. Go!"

Sonia sprang to her feet and disappeared down the hallway. Victoria followed a moment later and joined her friend in the deserted office. With some difficulty they roused a weary chambermaid.

The Englishman? Why, the young ladies were dreaming. The gentleman had gone away that afternoon, just before dinner, saying he felt so badly he thought it best to go to his home.

The girls caught at each other with a common impulse. "The landlord—wake him up! Where is he?"

The chambermaid demurred. It had been a busy day. They were all worn out. Was it permitted that people with nightmare should be waking honest folks out of their sleep?

Victoria sprang at her and shook her by the shoulders. "Wake the landlord, do you hear? There is something wrong! It must be looked into!"

But further parleying was made unnecessary by the appearance of the host, his suspenders hanging, his face swollen with drowsiness, and an expression anything but good-humored.

Sonia stated the case to him with hurried clearness, but his brain, being sleep-clouded and French, failed to take in its import.

The Englishman in fifty-seven? He had paid his bill and gone. Was it permitted to wake people at midnight—name of a name!—with such stories?

Victoria's anger mounted with the opposition. Very well, then! Mademoiselle Palintzka had given him warning. If a crime had been committed and the culprit escaped, his was the responsibility. Mademoiselle had done all she could. Where was the *commissaire* of police? He should be notified, then mademoiselle would wash her hands of the whole affair.

At the mention of police the fat little man shook his lethargy from him and announced himself willing to investigate—but what, and where?

"Take the pass-keys and a light, and rouse everyone in the front of the house!" Sonia commanded. "Undoubtedly the man came from there. If the occupants were out of the place, look about and see if anything has been disturbed."

The *garçon de peine* appeared inopportunely, and the party was once more delayed while voluminous explanations were made to him.

"A half-hour at least since we got here, and nothing done!" Victoria fretted, as at last the cortège, composed of the *garçon*, chambermaid and landlord, armed with lights, pass-keys and the sabre that adorned the hall wall, a witness to the prowess of the proprietor in the Franco-Prussian War, started on their mission of investigation.

An examination of the lower floor was quickly made. On the first landing the rooms opened showed only the confusion of occupancy, and the contents were of such scanty nature as to offer no allurement to thieves. Few of the patrons were in, but to these the landlord poured forth apologies and explanations that rapidly brought the excited inmates in scanty apparel to swell the throng of inves-

tigators. Room after room offered no solution of the mystery. The second floor was reached. Here the procession paused, the host addressing himself uncertainly to Sonia.

These were the apartments of the countess. Should they rouse her? The child was ill; there was also the maid. If any attack had been made on them they were sufficient in number to have made some outcry.

"Knock!" commanded Sonia.

A light tap on the door received no answer.

"They sleep," murmured the chambermaid, with a scornful glance at the disturbers of her own rest.

"Louder!" said the Russian, shortly.

Still no answer.

"*Madame la Comtesse!*" called the *garçon de peine*, in a discreet tone.

"Madame!" "Madame!" in various keys from the bystanders.

"Try the maid's door," the *bonne* suggested. A deputation attacked the two doors further down the hall. No answer.

The party looked at one another.

"They certainly did not go out this evening," the *garçon* ventured. "The little girl was worse; they had dinner in their rooms. The child was in bed then, for I brought up the tray."

"The keys!" Victoria impatiently demanded. "You are losing time. Go in!"

The keys were produced and fitted to the lock, but not until the whole party had once more invoked the countess to answer. The door was opened slowly, and they entered, preceded by the landlord, vaguely muttering apologies.

The candles lighted up a scene of the wildest confusion. The drawers of the bureau were emptied on the floor; a trunk stood open, from which the tilted trays had spilled their contents.

On the bed lay the countess, breathing heavily, a handkerchief over her head. The air was full of the smell of chloroform.

Sonia snatched the saturated linen

from the woman's face, while Victoria hurried to the adjoining room. The same confusion reigned, but to a less degree. The thief had evidently known where to look for his booty.

The sick child was stretched stiffly on her side, a little ball of cotton at her nostrils. Across the foot of the bed the maid lay huddled, a gag in her mouth and a cloth securely tied above it. Evidently she had been overpowered before the anæsthetic could be applied.

With deft fingers Victoria untied gag and bandages, and snatched the cotton from the child's face. The others crowded into the room, wet towels were brought, brandy applied and windows opened wide. The atmosphere grew lighter. The countess stirred uneasily and muttered.

"The doctor—send for him at once!" called Victoria. "The child—quick, quick! don't stand there staring! Don't you see that in her weak condition this may be fatal?"

The *garçon* hurried blunderingly off, and while willing hands ministered to the other victims, Victoria worked with agonized suspense over the limp little body. The heavy, gasping breath, the persistent coma and the pinched, waxen face were terrifying. Would the doctor never come? The maid was regaining consciousness, and from the other room the incoherent ramblings of the countess announced returning life. But the child made no sound, save the horrible, rasping breath that rattled in her throat.

Sonia came to the bedside and leaned over. "I wish I knew what to do," she murmured, "but we've done all we can. I have sent half a dozen of those jabbering idiots to fetch the police, so I suppose that sometime in the next week they will start on that man's track."

"Oh, why—oh, why didn't we give the alarm! We had him—caught red-handed," Victoria moaned, as she bathed the unconscious face on the pillow. "The coolness of the villain," she went on, "to invent that plausible

excuse on the spur of the moment; for we must have frightened him—but not out of his wits, unfortunately."

"If he gets away I'll never forgive myself," Sonia hotly exclaimed.

"Then you never will, for he has everything in his favor. The pilgrimage—it's the easiest thing in the world to get away with a change of clothes, or even without, for that matter, in this press of the visitors. To-morrow's jam will be bigger than ever. There are fifty trains a day to and from Auray. Every road is choked with vehicles. He'd be a fool if he were caught, and we know he isn't that. Oh, why doesn't the doctor come!"

"Madeleine, Madeleine!" the countess's voice screamed suddenly from the next room.

"Thank heaven!" Victoria muttered; "the mother's all right. Perhaps she knows what is best to be done. Go and see. Bring her in here as soon as you dare—yet no—the shock, right after the chloroform—I don't know what to say. Oh, why doesn't the doctor come!"

As if in answer to her cry the sound of opening doors and the stir of voices announced an arrival.

"Bring him here, Sonia," she begged. "The child is so weak, she needs him first."

The hotel-keeper, talking excitedly, and followed by a *commissaire* and a *gendarme*, pressed into the room.

"This is the lady," indicating Sonia. "It was she who gave the alarm."

"The doctor—didn't the doctor come?" interrupted Victoria, beside herself with disappointment.

"Not yet, mademoiselle—presently," the *gendarme* answered, kindly, as he advanced to the bedside. His face grew graver as he watched the child's labored breathing. "We must get on the rascal's track at once. Did you see him, too? I understand you and the other lady room together."

Victoria prevaricated. "My friend recognized him when she saw him going down the fire-escape, but I can give you a good description of him,

for I noticed him particularly during the day."

She rapidly portrayed the stranger, while her hearer jotted hastily in a note-book. In the window recess Sonia and the *commissaire* were engaged in animated conversation. Finally an exhaustive examination was made of the rooms and the balcony by which the thief had entered and left. Nothing of any interest was found, but the maid, at last fully conscious, though laboring under great excitement, was able to give her testimony.

The countess, worn out by her journey, had thrown herself, fully dressed, on her bed; the child was dozing. She, the witness, was sitting at the table with her back to the window, when she became conscious of a peculiar odor. She turned her head, and was at once caught from behind, and a gag forced between her teeth. She struggled, but was instantly overpowered. A cloth saturated with something was tied over her nose and mouth, and she lost consciousness.

Had she seen her assailant?

Not fully. She had the impression of a very heavy, thick-set man. She thought he had a black beard. His clothes were dark, of that she was sure. As he had attacked her from behind, she had not been able to see him clearly; but of his hands, which she had seen on her shoulder and in fastening the gag, she had a definite recollection. They were coarse, hairy and callous, the hands of a laborer, or at least one accustomed to manual work.

Would she recognize them if she saw them again?

Certainly. She should never forget them— And she became hysterical.

The countess remembered nothing, having passed from her natural sleep into the anæsthetic with only a slight struggle. But from her the motive of the crime was learned. She had brought with her a large sum of money and a quantity of jewels, which it had been her intention to present to the miraculous statue if, by

St. Anne's intercession, her child were cured. It was evident the thief had some knowledge of this treasure, the police argued, from the fact that none of the more accessible rooms in the house had been disturbed.

The countess gave her testimony through tears and entreaties, begging to be taken to her daughter. The arrival of the doctor interrupted the examination, and by his orders the unfortunate mother was at once admitted to the child's bedside. The effects of the anæsthetic had passed, but no look of recognition came in the feverish eyes. Even the mother's voice and touch failed in their mission. When at last the long-closed lips parted, shriek after shriek of blind terror woke the silence of the room. The doctor intervened, and drugged the child to unconsciousness again.

The room had been cleared of all strangers except Sonia and Victoria, who remained in obedience to the supplication of the distracted woman. To Victoria's trembling inquiry the doctor shook his head.

"It's only a matter of time. Meningitis—she would have died anyway; but the fright and the chloroform—it will not be long."

"You must prepare her. She still hopes for a miracle," said Victoria, glancing at the kneeling figure of the black countess, who, prostrated at the foot of her daughter's bed, repeated prayer after prayer with agonized rapidity, clasping a worn rosary in her burning hands.

The candles, guttering in their holders, threw gigantic, deformed shadows on the bare walls, lighted up the tumbled bed, and drew sharp lines about the face of the dying child. Against the whiteness of sheets and pillows, the intensely black, shrunken figure of the bereaved woman seemed doubly somber.

The doctor, with his squat figure, oddly assorted garments, and heavy, weary face, seemed a creature of Balzac's pen turned flesh and blood. Victoria gazed on the scene, her nerves tingling.

"I think," she whispered to him,

"we, my friend and I, would better go. You can't let this blow strike her suddenly. I'm sure she'd go mad. If you should need us, send word; we'll come at once. But she would better be alone when she knows."

The physician nodded, and Victoria, beckoning to Sonia, slipped from the room into the hall. The whole house seemed dimly astir, but they saw no one as they made their way to the room. They did not undress, but lay down on their cots without speaking, and gazed on the sickly dawn, that made a pale square of the window. An hour—two hours; the stir of waking things grew in the outer air; crowing of cocks, singing of birds, vague halloas, the stamping and champing of stabled horses. The chimes rang four, another hour five, and then six. The light of the new sun was streaming pale and brilliant on the old courtyard. Above the chimney-pots the white church spires gleamed against the hazy blue of the July morning. St. Anne's colossal statue, doubly gilded by its own precious leaf and the sun's contribution, gleamed and glittered. Through the opened window a shaft of light boiled with tiny motes of gold.

Sonia turned for the thousandth time on her little bed.

"Are you asleep, Victoria?" she murmured.

Her friend shifted her position, threw her rounded arm over her tumbled hair, and sighed. "No, I'm not—are you?"

"No."

"I can't shake off the impression. That poor, poor woman!"

"Nor I," and Sonia half-raised herself. "Have you ever read Maeterlinck's play, 'The Intruder'? Well, I feel like the blind man, who sees Death in the room. I have an actual horror of what seems a physical presence."

Victoria slipped her feet to the bare floor. "So have I. It's all a nightmare; and, Sonia, think what a contrast! Yesterday we were with the pilgrimage; the songs of praise, peace, good will to men; faith, hope,

charity, lights, music, mystery. Then, suddenly, it's sickness, crime, death! We came to a miracle play, and we have seen a tragedy!"

There was a silence, during which the square of sunshine crept softly down the room.

Sonia spoke. "To have robbed that woman, bringing her offerings to St. Anne, seems worse than robbing a church, doesn't it? How shall such a man be punished?"

"He won't be caught," Victoria answered, with conviction. "He has timed himself so well. He's a man of resource. If we hadn't seen him, he would have been perfectly safe. I bet he carried his stuff away in that leather camera-case. A foreigner with a camera—the most natural thing in the world, supposing he were seen before he could put his booty in a place of safety."

"Did you notice," said Sonia, dreamily, "that the maid's description of the hands didn't fit at all?"

Her friend nodded. "Yes, there may have been two men. One may have gone down the ladder when you came to the door for me; hardly, though—you would have heard distinctly if there had been more than one. Oh, well, I suppose the woman was too excited to see straight. The beard, of course, may have been false; but they won't find him, anyway."

"We ought to get up, I suppose. It's after eight. Are you going to see the procession?" The Russian rose as she spoke, and proceeded to as dainty a toilette as the place permitted.

Victoria followed her example, languidly. "I suppose we might as well see all there is to be seen, but I have no heart for anything. Where are the girls? I should have thought they would have come for us long ago."

Sonia wrapped her hair in a shining coil. "No, I told them last night to get up and go out when they pleased, and leave us to sleep late. I have no patience with traveling in a party where all feel they must hang together, even if their tastes are varied. If the girls went out early they

probably breakfasted in the tents, and don't know anything yet. I suppose we ought to eat," she added, after a moment.

"I'm not hungry," the answer came, promptly.

Sonia leaned from the window and called to a passing servant, "Send two *déjeuners* up, please." Then, withdrawing her head, she smiled. "There are advantages in living over the stable; it insures better service. We might have spent the whole morning ringing a bell and been ignored, but bawling out of the window insures attention."

Breakfast arrived with surprising promptness, the two girls having developed into important persons of the household. At any other time the curiosity and maneuvering of the servant would have been vastly amusing; now it was only an irritation. They answered awestruck questions with abrupt sharpness, and finally, unable to rid themselves of her queries, took refuge in silence.

"It's nearly time for the procession," Sonia observed, glancing at her watch, as the reluctant waitress disappeared; "we ought to go early if we want to see anything."

Absently adjusting the old campaign hat on her heavy hair, Victoria picked up her beloved camera. "I'm going to inquire how they are. I'll meet you in the office."

"Better finish your coffee," Sonia called after her. But the firm tread was already reverberating far down the bare hallway. The Russian pushed back her plate and rose wearily. Truly life was a strange thing—so strange it dizzied one's brain with its questions of whence and whither. Perhaps even now that little child knew more than she, with all her varied and multiplied experiences—if there was any conscious knowledge on that mysterious other side!

She drew her hat over her eyes and stepped out. The passage was cold and chill. She shivered slightly, and quickened her step. Out in the warmth and the sunshine once more her thoughts would be more cheerful,

she reflected, as she made her way through the labyrinthine passages. She reached the office, filled with chattering visitors by whom the robbery of the night was being discussed from every standpoint. The crowd made way for her, and she reached the doorway, where she leaned, waiting. The square was one seething mass of struggling humanity, swaying, vast, expectant. Men in white, bearing staves, were opening a passage before the great main entrance of the church. A full brass band was massing its forces ready to herald the opening of the doors. Everywhere people were hurrying, running and calling, scrambling for better positions or endeavoring to fight their way through the press. All was color, light, animation, expectation and faith. A soft touch on her arm roused her. She looked up into Victoria's face, set hard and white, and two heavy tears slipping slowly down her cheeks.

For a moment Victoria dared not trust her voice, but swallowed hard, looking straight ahead with fixed eyes.

"She's dead," she said, finally. "I have seen her."

The band crashed forth a strain of triumph, the cathedral doors swung wide, and amid the acclaiming of the crowd, surrounded by cardinals and bishops in scarlet and purple, the statue of many miracles, under its canopy of gold, swung glittering into the sunlight.

I

THE room was hung in green of varying shades, from palest malachite and *réséda* to deepest olive and emerald. This verdant retreat was the outcome of an essay that had fallen into Philippa Ford's hands at the time of the purchase and restoration of the old Verplanck mansion in New York. One statement was to the effect that a love of green indicated strong individuality, and this appealed at once to the girl, whose keenest desire in life was to enforce her personality. Being blonde

and lissome, the little reception-room framed what she was pleased to style her beauty with an added elegance and refinement, at the same time proving advantageously unbecoming to many of her callers. Just now she looked really charming as she leaned among the divan cushions, daintily gowned in a creation of cream lace and lavender crêpe that made her seem some great pale-toned Parma violet in its setting of leaves.

"Do pour yourself some tea, dear girl," she murmured. "I'm too lazy to move, or I'd do it for you; besides, I am searching your long-lost countenance for the ravages of time, and I can't find one—not a ravage."

Victoria, sitting opposite, raised her gray eyes, in which a gleam of mischief sparkled. "Be sure you tell everyone else that," she laughed.

Philippa squirmed. She had been mentally rehearsing a future speech to her next interested caller: "The poor, dear Claudel girl is terribly haggard. I fear she has been trying to live on nothing over there—you know how Americans do." It was as if the "poor dear" had suddenly taken a peep at her brains. So, quickly assuming her sweetest tone of grieving affection, she ejaculated, "Oh, Vic, after all the years of our ideal friendship, how could you infer such a thing!"

"You are teased as easily as ever, I see," was all the answer she received, as the returned prodigal brushed cake crumbs from her well-fitting tailor-made gown of the newest and most Parisian fashion.

"It's a sweet frock," Philippa commented, dreamily, "and your toque is very smart; that forward tilt suits you. The hats this year were invented simply to annoy me. Everything over the eyes, and my style is the off-the-face, flaring thing. Have you seen many people since you arrived—our people, I mean?"

Her friend shook her head slowly. "No, not many. Bob and Howard Dame met me at the wharf, and last night Morton Conway came up. Dear old thing! I was jolly glad to see him."

She was staring at the Dutch silver tea caddy, and did not see the quick flush that mounted to the white temples of her hostess.

"A charming fellow, and one to whom I have become greatly attached," the lady remarked, in the somewhat stilted language she affected when she remembered to do so.

Victoria's frank eyes sought her face at once with eagerness.

"Really? I thought you were mere acquaintances. I forget how long I have been away, and how many friendships have been made and unmade. No wonder you like him, though. Old Mort is the salt of the earth—a *Don Quixote* of most admirable intelligence. Indeed, I don't know another of whom I can speak in such unreserved praise; and seeing that I've known him all my life—which amounts to a quarter of a century—that is saying a great deal."

A green glint shot from Philippa's half-closed blue eyes—possibly the reflection of her surroundings, possibly the evidence of the whereabouts of a certain monster, as she recalled the common supposition of a former understanding between these two. Mentally, she was quickly calculating. Was Victoria in love with him? Had he ever had a tenderness for her? Either or both being the case, were her own fascinations superior? With a marvelous accuracy she took count of stock and concluded that Victoria would be a dangerous rival, but her belief in her own power made her confident of ultimate success, even if Morton were not already completely under her spell. However, with instinctive foresight she decided that she would precipitate matters and bring about the proposal she had been holding off with consummate skill for the past month. Engagements entailed obligations, but Morton Conway was too good a catch to lose, and Philippa felt instinctively that the only danger menacing her supremacy was personified before her.

All this passed in a brain-flash, with the swiftness and certainty of a lightning calculator, while she idly punched

the pillows into more alluring curves and her society self supplied a small-talk item.

"Tilly Genadet is to be married next week. Are you going to her wedding?"

"I think so," Miss Claudel replied, as she rose to her feet and with various facial contortions proceeded to readjust her veil.

"You're not leaving now, are you, dear?" and Philippa uncurled herself. "It's only five o'clock."

"Yes, I'm off. Ethel Tracy sent a note over this morning asking me to drop in to dinner—just the family, you know. Good-bye. Come over to the studio any time. I'm sharing Mrs. Testly Durham's apartment, so you won't see my name on the board."

"Mrs. Testly Durham, the writer?" Philippa asked, eagerly.

"Yes. You seem surprised."

"Where did you meet her?"

"In Paris. We spent last Winter in the same house."

"I'd like to know her."

"Well, call on me in the morning and you'll find her home. Good-bye again."

Philippa stepped to the window and watched her friend's odd but not inelegant figure as it descended the broad steps. "What should her relations with Victoria be?" she mused. Evidently she had new advantages and losses to adjust and balance. Victoria staying with Mrs. Testly Durham, the famous authoress, was a different thing from Victoria by herself in some studio. Then there was the Morton question. These suggestions hardly framed themselves as thoughts. She was unconscious of her own calculating meanness, tuft-hunting and snobbishness, and looked on herself as a veritable paragon of sincerity, loyalty and broad-minded independence.

She turned with a little sigh back to the green depths of the divan and contemplated her reflection in the tilted mirror opposite. Yes, gossip had for years prophesied Victoria's engagement to Morton. There must be

fire where smoke is seen. She must make sure of Morton at once. It was a nuisance, particularly just now, when her flirtation with Valdeck was so interesting; but she could keep the secret from everyone but Victoria. Once in a position to make a confidante of her, she could be sure that her manor would remain unpoached.

Suddenly the question presented itself definitely. Why was she so afraid of Victoria? She had no real reason. Only merest gossip held that the life-long affection that had existed between the two had ever been, or ever would be, anything more than intellectual fraternity. The answer came back from her other self: "Because Victoria had never appreciated her at her true worth." In fact, she more than suspected that she was not looked up to and approved of in that quarter as she expected and demanded from her associates. In fact, if Victoria knew of the impending engagement she was quite capable of making a desperate opposition. Philippa's heart hardened with a passing qualm of hate; she sat up suddenly and angrily. Almost she had admitted to herself that she was no fit mate for such a man, that the effort Victoria would undoubtedly make was founded on a quite accurate penetration of her real character. The momentary spasm of dislike that had gripped her returned a hundredfold stronger, steady and burning. She must lose the fun and excitement of her present life, because her hand was forced; she must make sure of the brilliant future her marriage to Morton Conway would bring. The cards of that trick must be played and the mystery of her game dispelled; all because a long absent member of her set had seen fit to return too soon.

A ring at the door-bell roused her. Hastily she smoothed her hair and assumed a pose of absent-minded grace.

"Monsieur Valdeck," announced the butler, in a gentle tone of self-effacement.

The sea-green portières parted and the visitor advanced, extending a

well-gloved hand in elaborate greeting.

Philippa smiled with animation and held up her jeweled fingers to the lingering and meaning kiss of the new arrival. She colored a little, which lent an unexpected *ingénue* expression to the consummate artificiality of her pose. The trick of blushing, really due to the physical perfection and delicacy of her skin, passed with all save Victoria and a few rather amusedly cynical men for a sympathetically emotional expression of her innocent young soul.

A short, rather troubled silence ensued, which he broke abruptly, tossing a square box into her lap.

"See the wonders of love, my lady. I divined what robe you would wear, and I matched it on my way here."

She thanked him with her eyes, and poutingly fumbled with the string.

"Permit me," he murmured, and leaning over her till his auburn hair touched her cheek, deliberately cut the ribbon with his tiny gold-handled penknife. He drew back slowly, as if her nearness held him like a magnet.

With a pretty gesture of admiration she drew from their wrappings a heavy bunch of Russian violets, that instantly swung the perfume of their blossoms through the room.

"Do you wish to break my heart?" he inquired, seriously.

She inhaled the flowers' perfume, gazing at the bouquet with eyes now grown as violet as the blossoms. "I don't know. I think I might—"

"You ought to say, I know I have."

She shook her head. "No; not yet."

"You never believe," he sighed.

"No."

"Shall I never get my passport to your heart?"

She temporized. "Let me see, how should I make it out? 'Permit to travel in the heart of Philippa Ford, one Lucius Valdeck, native of Poland. Height, five feet, eleven inches. Black eyes and eyebrows, auburn hair. Weight, about—let's see—a hundred and seventy—'"

"Much more—two hundred."

"Two hundred! Nonsense!"

"My heart is so heavy."

"Don't be a bore."

"Am I a bore?"

She nodded.

"What must I do to amuse?"

"Oh, tell me anything that's interesting—tell me about yourself."

He sobered. "I have already told you too much."

She leaned toward him sweetly.

"You can trust me. I am a woman who can keep a secret."

"I believe it," he answered, in the same grave tone, "otherwise I never should have breathed a word of my mission here."

"You know," she continued, laying her hand on his arm, "I am with you in all sympathy. I understand your noble wish to help your people. If you had been a Nihilist I never could have listened to you with such confidence. But your plan to raise your fellow countrymen by education, even if it has to be given in secret, is wholly good and wise and noble. It is the first really sensible effort I have heard of."

Taking her hand, he kissed it with respectful adoration. "You give me courage, my lady."

Carried away by the situation, she went on, with exaltation: "And if ever I can help you, let me know; you will always have a friend in me."

"What you have just promised I beg you to remember. Some day I may have to ask your favor," he said, slowly. Then, rising nervously, he peered into the empty hall.

"We are alone," she murmured, reassuringly; "you are quite safe."

He seated himself, relaxing to the luxurious fulness of the divan. "I forget I am in the land of the free. I have lived so long under the espionage of the police. And to think," he said, hotly, "that my only crime is the desire to help and educate my unfortunate people! The Russians have taken away our lands and privileges; they are now robbing us of our brains. Soon there will be nothing left but our music—and

that they cannot kill." He spoke with passion that found a quick response in the dramatic instincts of his hearer.

"In these days of indifference your patriotism fires one," she cried. "You make me want to help. I am so eager to know more. Oh, I wish you would tell me about your work and those who help you. Your stories, the other night, kept me awake thinking of the strange gatherings in secret and danger, when your devoted comrades teach their own prohibited tongue and keep alive the individuality of the race that aliens would have crushed out. I could never have believed in such tyranny if you yourself hadn't told me. It is so uncalled for, so cruel!"

He nodded, solemnly. "It is past belief, and if you questioned a Russian he would emphatically deny it, either because he is ignorant of the truth or because he dares not admit it. Only those who have lived as I have, and seen what I have, can realize all that the suppression of the Poles really means. The power we are contending with is so great, so secret, so terrible—why, even here I am probably watched by Russian spies. I am known to be a contributor to the 'Educational Society'—indeed, that is why I came here. My usefulness at home was ruined by their having suspected my connection with the work. They cannot prevent my collecting funds in America, but they can and will try to prevent their ever reaching their destination."

"How do you manage?" Philippa begged.

He pulled himself up, as if his enthusiasm had already outrun his caution.

"That I cannot reveal, even to you, so don't ask me."

"Are there women connected with the work?" she inquired.

"Many; both teachers and outside workers. You see, the element we represent is as down on the bloody and incendiary doctrines of the Nihilists as it is on the oppression and cruelty of the Russians, consequently

our membership enrolls many women, too wise and gentle to be drawn into anarchy, and too devoted and clear-visioned to be entirely claimed by a life of frivolity. Oh, dear lady, I wish you could know some of them. I am sure you would find them congenial—almost your equal in heart, mind and charm."

His verbose sentences and elaborate compliments somehow sat well on him, and the foreign accent that accompanied his words was a charm in itself. Philippa caught herself vaguely wishing that the handsome enthusiast were a better catch. If only he had Morton's money and social position! Ah, well, it was all nonsense; foreigners, however fascinating, were never certainties.

He had risen restlessly and wandered to the window. He glanced out, but turned hastily.

"Mr. Conway is crossing the street. Coming here, I suppose," he said, bitterly. "Tell me, before we are interrupted, will you go with me on Monday to Madame Despard's studio, in the Carnegie—a little reunion of '*grands esprits*,' a glimpse of bohemian?"

Her face lighted. "Yes, indeed; I shall love it, I know."

A ring at the door-bell announced the new arrival.

"You like him?" Valdeck asked, half in question, half in challenge.

"He is my dearest friend, you know. I have often thought of him as a sort of *Don Quixote* plus intelligence," Philippa plagiarized soulfully.

He looked admiration at her. "I love the way you paint a character in a single sentence."

"Mr. Conway," announced the butler.

Valdeck collected his hat, stick and gloves, and bowed politely. The two men exchanged perfunctory greetings, and the graceful foreigner took his leave. The newcomer watched him with undisguised annoyance.

"Philippa, do you like that man?"

She smiled gleefully. "That's just what he asked about you."

This did not tend to soothe Mor-

ton's feelings. "You are so much in his society! How did you meet him?"

"He came from New Orleans with a letter of introduction from one of my old schoolmates, Clarissa Pointue—you know the Pointues, of Louisiana, who own Angel Island?"

"Victoria says that letters of introduction and confidences are alike—they had better not be given. By the way, she's back, you know."

"Have you seen her?" she asked, with assumed indifference, stretching her little trap.

"Of course. I went last night as soon as I knew where she was. She is one of my oldest and best friends—that *rara avis*, a woman chum."

"She is a dear. She was here a few moments ago. If you had come a little earlier you would have been rewarded."

"By finding you two discussing the latest Paris novelties, and having no satisfaction out of either of you."

"You see we are so intimate," she smiled, "she came over at once to see me. Wasn't it dear of her?" She hoped Victoria would not by any chance mention the fact that Philippa, having seen her from the window, had sent the butler to stop her, and insist on her dropping in for a moment. However, even if she did, it didn't amount to much. Philippa argued to herself that the more praise she lavished on her rival the more would any derogatory remark by Victoria concerning herself sound ungrateful and mean in Morton's ears. She went on, enthusiastically: "Her home-coming is such a joy to me! She is one of the few really loyal, honest women, trustworthy and genuine, who would burn off their hands rather than hurt a friend."

Morton nodded appreciation. "A woman in a thousand, and I am as glad to see your affection for her as I am sorry to see you wasting yourself on a cad like Valdeck."

Philippa saw her chance, and took it.

"You have no real reason to dislike him, Morton, and you know it."

"Oh, haven't I?"

"It's just because he is here so much, and you're—you're—it hurts me to have you think—" She broke off with a plaintive note.

He had never seen her with the bars of her coquetry down, and his love of her flamed up with the vision of his hope. He came across quickly, leaning with both hands on the tea table. "I'm foolish because I'm jealous, because—I love you, Philippa."

She fumbled with the sugar-tongs, her fair head bent. Forcibly he raised her reluctant chin and looked into her eyes. What he saw there stung through him like an electric shock.

"Oh, sweetheart! sweetheart!" he murmured, kissing her on her uplifted, unresisting mouth. "Why did you play with me so long?"

There was silence in the little boudoir. Then she disengaged herself from his enfolding arm and looked at him fondly. She pushed back his heavy brown hair and fingered his cravat, as a child takes possession of a new toy.

"Morton," she said, in a very low voice, "I—I—don't want to announce it, dear. Aunt Lucy has her heart set on my marrying Cousin Gabe, and she's been so good to me—I want to win her over to you without giving her annoyance. You understand, dear?"

"I hate the deceit of it," he answered, after a moment's uncomfortable silence. Her instant desire for concealment hurt him. Philippa looked pained. He felt like a blundering bore, and quickly added: "But it's just like you to feel that way about your aunt, and I love you for it."

She cuddled close to him, holding his hand in both hers and twisting his plain gold seal as if it engrossed her whole attention. "You see I'm an orphan. I haven't much money—just barely enough to give me necessities. Aunt Lucy has done everything for me, you can't guess half; and if I suddenly turn against her—for she'll think it that—it will break

her heart. She will call me ungrateful, and, Morton, you know I'm anything but that. I—I couldn't bear it." A childish quiver of her lips spoke louder than words, for the actress in her was feeling the part, and her emotion was almost genuine.

"Whatever you think best I'll abide by. I couldn't love you so if I didn't trust you absolutely," he answered, softly.

The rattle and chink of a stopping carriage broke in on them.

"There she is now!" Philippa exclaimed, in a sharp whisper, withdrawing from his neighborhood and quickly smoothing her hair.

A slam, a ring, the approach of the butler, a gust of cold air that swung the curtains, and Mrs. Pendington Ford entered. A swift glance of her sharp gray eyes took in her niece's indifference, Morton's confusion, the dents in the pillows and the disarray of the tea things. The pupils of her eyes showed two points of interrogation as she glanced toward Philippa, but she greeted the caller with formal grace. There was something of the drum-major about the lady. One expected to see her swing her gold-knobbed parasol, toss it above her voluminous bonnet, to catch it again and spin it solemnly on the tips of her two lightly gloved fingers. She was tall, stout, florid. If she had been born a century earlier she would have been a loud-mouthed, gambling duchess; now she suggested only the drum-major.

Seating herself on the uttermost edge of a chair, the better to maintain the upright dignity of her carriage, she smiled slowly and wisely.

"My dear, a fresh cup, please. I am faint, positively. I drove round the Park and stopped at the Tredways'. They must get their tea from a bargain counter. I really could not touch it."

"Victoria Claudel has just been here," Philippa announced, gaily, as she prepared her aunt a cup of tea.

"Indeed!" Mrs. Pendington Ford's voice was not very cordial. "Where is she stopping?"

"She is sharing Mrs. Testly Durham's suite at the Carnegie."

"The writer?"

"Yes, Aunt Lucy. They are very intimate friends."

Victoria's stock went up six points, and the drum-major sipped her tea. "We must have them to dinner some time, Philippa. Miss Claudel is an old friend of yours, is she not, Mr. Conway?"

"Since we were children," Morton replied, glad to have a direct question to answer, and feeling unable to cope with general conversation.

"I remember her mother," Mrs. Ford went on, "Miss Graves, of Philadelphia, a delightful girl. Her marriage to Mr. Claudel was considered quite a brilliant one, but, unluckily, he was more of a scholar than a man of business—lost money constantly. It was really fortunate he died early, or the family would have been quite impoverished. As it was, the children and Victoria will only have barely enough to live on."

"The estate is to be settled now, I think," said Philippa. "Bob is of age, if I'm not mistaken."

"She came home on that account," Morton affirmed.

Mrs. Ford was benign as she rose to her feet. "Well, Philippa dear, don't forget you must dress for the Bentlys' dinner. You must excuse my rudeness, Mr. Conway, but she is such a scatter-brained girl that if she is having an interesting conversation she forgets her engagements, and is known as the late Miss Ford."

Morton blushed and glanced at his watch. "I am the one to beg indulgence; it's shockingly late—I——"

Mrs. Ford smiled, almost affectionately. "My dear man, don't apologize for paying us such a nice, indirect compliment. Philippa, dear, you must invite Mr. Conway when we ask Victoria and Mrs. Testly Durham to dinner. You'll be sure to come, won't you?"

Morton muttered his thanks, and took his leave.

As the street door closed the aunt and niece faced each other.

"It's done, then. My congratulations, dear." Approval beamed from the majestic presence.

Philippa punched a pillow and shrugged her shoulders.

"Yes."

"Well, it was about time you came to your senses and brought things to a crisis. I began to despair of you," Mrs. Ford coolly commented.

"I can take care of myself."

"No, my love, you can't, as I've noticed to my great regret. However, I shall announce the engagement with great pleasure."

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" Philippa's face grew crimson with annoyance.

"What are you up to now?" her aunt inquired, with obvious cynicism.

"Nothing. But I don't want it known yet. I've good reasons."

Mrs. Ford went to the core of the matter with brutal directness. "You have your good-for-nothing flirtation with that Valdeck on foot; that's what you have. Now mark my words, you'll get into trouble. If you do, don't come to me. You are a fool if you take chances with Morton Conway. My advice is, announce your engagement at once, and marry soon."

"Time enough to settle down," Philippa jerked out, irritably.

"My dear," her aunt replied, "please remember that people usually have to settle up before they can settle down."

"Moralize all you please, auntie, dear," and Philippa took another tack, "but please don't go announcing till I tell you. I give you my word of honor I'll not lose him."

Mrs. Ford spread her sails and swept up the stairs. "Very well," she said, over her shoulder; "but don't get too much mixed up with Valdeck."

"What have you against him? I thought you prided yourself on the charity of your judgment," sneered Philippa, as she followed in her aunt's rustling wake.

Mrs. Pendington Ford sighed. "I am charitable in my judgments, be-

cause one must have men for afternoon teas, but I wouldn't risk my queen to save a crook—I mean a rook—to play with. What will you wear to-night?"

Philippa considered. Valdeck would be asked, and he liked odd things. "The green-spangled one," she answered.

"Oh, is he to be there?" the drum-major inquired, negligently, as she closed her bedroom door.

Philippa stamped her foot with vexation and fairly fled up-stairs to her own sanctuary. There she flung, or more properly speaking, disposed herself on her lounge, and rapidly reviewed the recent crowded hours. She was engaged—that she knew; she was in love—she imagined. How dreadfully unfortunate that the two statements were not the natural sequence of each other. A great pity for herself swept over her. Alas for money conditions! cruel, worldly considerations! But she must be strong, she must be wise and keep this foolish passion in its place. She pictured herself amid the luxurious surroundings her future fortune would assure her, and promptly forgot her *peine de cœur* in this pleasant occupation. It was recalled, however, by the entrance of her maid, who bore a square envelope directed in Valdeck's familiar hand, and a small box tied with a pink string.

"Madame says," timidly suggested the servant, "that mademoiselle is not to waste time in dressing. What gown, mademoiselle?"

"Green spangles," Philippa answered, absently, as she tore open the note.

"Most sweet lady," it began, "pardon my presumption, but your kindness to-day touched me greatly. Your offer of help, coming, as it did, when I was racked by fears and perhaps needless nervousness, has been as medicine to me. You who are so kind add one more obligation to the many you have heaped on me by accepting the little gift I send herewith. The pin was my mother's and my mother's mother's for genera-

tions. So it is the sentiment that is attached to it that makes it worthy of you rather than its paltry value. Pray accept this little keepsake in the spirit of the sender.

"LUCIUS VALDECK."

As she read, that which stood with Philippa in the place of conscience smote her because she had forgotten her devoted knight in the contemplation of her mundane future. To make amends, and since the dramatic qualities of the situation seemed to require it, she kissed the note, carefully avoiding the observation of the maid. Next, with swift fingers, she unfastened the packet. A little, hot wave of joy broke over her as its contents lay revealed—an ancient brooch of rose diamonds set about a splendid emerald, matchless in color, though flawed. Wound through the design were two tiny gold dolphins, from whose mouths swinging pendants hung. A gem of workmanship, beautiful, priceless! Philippa gazed at it in delight; then, as if fearing her aunt's detective eye and ironic laugh, she hastily hid the jewel in her bosom.

II

"MONDAY," said Victoria, as she tore the Sunday slip from the calendar. "Let's see what it says. 'Lives of great men all remind us—' Oh, dear! why will they supply us with such trite quotations?"

"I shall compose a cynic's calendar," said Mrs. Durham from her desk; "a little thing with quotations from well-known philosophers, notably Voltaire and Carlyle."

"Dyspeptic's calendar would be better," volunteered Miss Claudel. "I'll contribute a proverb. 'It's a strong head that hath no turning.'"

"Oh," said Mrs. Durham, presently, "don't you want to go over to Madame Despard's studio this afternoon? She has one of her 'at homes.' They are very curious and wholly instructive. There assemble the cream of what society thinks is bohemia, an exhibition of genuine Angoras. No

man admitted to the inner circle unless his ambrosial locks sweep his collar—the collar generally needs it badly. I go constantly. It's a morbid craving, but I can't control it."

Victoria discovered a box of chocolates, and fell on them voraciously. "My dear, I've seen such a lot of foolishness in the Paris studios that I must beg to be excused."

Mrs. Durham left her desk and came across to the seductive sweets. "No, you never saw anything like this," she insisted; "it has to be seen to be believed. It is a collection of creatures impossible in any other society but the great, gullible American *beau monde*. Nowhere else would such a delightful aggregation of side-show freaks be taken seriously. I love them, I am filled with a fiendish glee whenever I go. It's like living in a farce-comedy. You'd better come."

"All right," Victoria assented. "How do you dress the part?"

"Soulfully. Soul is the keynote of these meetings. If you have anything in the way of a poem, wear it. The Despard always wears a poem. The last was a sonnet in *solferino*."

"I have a ballad in blue, I think, but it's in the bottom of my trunk," Victoria suggested. "I might wear a very short golf skirt and go as a quatrain—I have been told my feet are correct."

"I," said Mrs. Durham, "will disport my usual lines in a lavender with lace refrain. Mr. Theodore Trent Gore told me last time that it reminded him of Beethoven's Second Symphony."

A half-hour skilfully employed produced two very striking *chefs d'œuvre*; Mrs. Durham, pretty, slender and blond; Victoria, handsome, wholesome and richly brunette. They stepped into the empty, resonant corridor, and after threading many devious mazes and labyrinthine passages emerged into a vestibule from which three doors opened. They were all ajar, and from beyond emanated a buzz of conversation and a chink of glasses. Mrs. Durham took

the lead, and pushing aside the bamboo curtains, they entered a large room, half drawing-room, half studio. The upper half, lighted by an immense glass window covering nearly the whole wall space, was more or less furnished by easels, paint brushes in ginger jars, bespattered palettes and scraps of drapery. The lower half of the apartment offered a not ill-disposed assortment of the conventional bibelots of the cultivated collector. A colored plaster cast of the "Unknown Lady," and a reproduction of the "Tête de Cire," attributed to Raphael, stood on Florentine brackets above the heavy Empire writing desk of vast proportions. Everywhere hung sketches, usually unframed and bearing well-known signatures. A collection of Japanese prints in gray *passepartout* came next to the door opening into the adjoining room, and above the grand piano a dozen or more framed photographs of celebrities, all signed and bearing more or less complimentary remarks concerning their dear and admired Madame Despard. To anyone unacquainted with the habits of celebrities this array was vastly impressive, but it is such an easy way to repay attentions that—well, why rob Madame Despard of her greatest glory?

The details of the place only impressed Victoria when she had leisure to observe, as everything to a height of six feet was obscured by the elbowing, chattering crowd that filled the room, a kaleidoscope of all feminine textures and hues, plentifully besprinkled with the sober colors of the male visitors; for the hostess prided herself that men were never lacking for her "at homes." Mrs. Durham darted between the entering groups like a busy shuttle in the animated loom, and seized on the attention of a weary-eyed woman draped in a Spanish shawl.

"Dear madame," she cried, "as wonderful as ever—but you are all so wonderful! I have brought my very dear friend, Miss Claudel. She is of the elect."

The hostess enveloped the newcomer in an intent, thoughtful gaze. "Such words of praise from you, dear Muse, more than insure her sisterhood among us. Miss Claudel, we are a little circle of souls tightly drawn to one another by the bonds of the mind and heart. Our welcome is sincere." Other guests claimed her attention, and she turned away.

Mrs. Durham laughed and called Victoria's attention to a couple near them. "There is Mr. Valdeck with a very smart-looking woman. Probably he's showing her bohemia as one takes a party through the slums."

"Why, that's Philippa Ford," Victoria exclaimed. "Who did you say the man was?"

"Lucius Valdeck, an Austrian or a Pole or something, traveling for pleasure. He hasn't been here long. In fact, when I met him he was just up from New Orleans, and that wasn't more than—let's see—three months ago. He has made his way with wonderful rapidity. One meets him everywhere, and he hasn't a title, either."

Victoria drew her heavy brows together in a frown. "I've seen him before, I'm sure I have; but I can't place him."

"Oh, probably; he's the sort of a person one would be sure to meet in society, either proper or improper."

"I'll ask Philippa about him. He's somebody, or she wouldn't bother with him. By the way, I promised her she should meet you. She admires your work immensely. I'll call her over."

Victoria did so, introductions followed, and the authoress found herself metaphorically clasped to the breast of her "constant reader."

Meanwhile, Valdeck, having become separated from Philippa in the latter's dash for the divan, was looking about eagerly in search of her. The crowd was so great that the low seat in the corner was almost constantly obscured from his view, and it is doubtful if he would have discovered where she was, had he not become conscious of being stared at by

someone. He shifted uneasily with the uncanny sensation, and looking in the direction of the annoyance, caught sight of his lady, deep in animated conversation with a woman in lavender, who seemed rather overpowered by the attention. But she was not looking at him; it was not she that called his attention. Suddenly his eyes met Victoria's as she stared in an evident effort to place him. A vision clear and sharp flashed before his eyes—a vision of that same face, and another as striking, framed in the darkness of a dormer window and illuminated by a candle suddenly flashed aloft. His heart stopped beating.

"Auray!" He almost spoke the word. Outwardly his calm did not desert him. Changing his direction, as if he had perceived someone requiring his attention, he disappeared into the adjoining room, where the punch bowl, ringed with glasses, called the convivially inclined. He poured himself a glass, noticing as he did so a slight tremor in his hand, and with wonderful nerve steadied himself and drank.

"This has got to be planned for," he thought. "I must keep out of sight if possible; if not, it will have to be brazened out. Oh, the damnable luck of it!"

A thread of superstitious fear tightened in his heart. He had always been so amazingly fortunate. Was a turn in that fickle wheel to transform his car of triumph into the juggernaut that should crush him? He plucked out the fear resolutely. Very probably she had not recognized him. However, she evidently felt that she had seen him before. From that to recognition was only a step, one that might or might not be taken, but one to be prepared for. He glanced rapidly over his present position. So far as he could judge, it was secure; his letters of introduction had been excellent. The warm-hearted Southerners to whom he had devoted himself on his ocean trip had more than rewarded his attentions. Nothing could be proved for months, and all

he wanted was another week or two of his present freedom.

He stopped short. The pin! the jewel he had foolishly given Philippa, the more securely to bind her to his interests! It was a part of that very Auray haul! Again a stab of foreboding smote him, and he cursed himself.

"That's what I get for letting my foolish antiquarian respect get the better of my judgment," he thought. "It should have been broken up along with the modern pieces, though it was hardly worth five hundred francs, aside from its artistic value. Rose diamonds have no market, and the emerald—good color—was terribly flawed. There's only one chance in a million that that girl may have seen it on the old lady; another chance in a thousand that she would recall it sufficiently to identify it. But—I must get the thing from Philippa at any cost," he said, aloud. "She's wearing it!" flashed over him. He drank another glass of punch and sat down. "She has her sable cape on," he argued; "it's becoming; she won't take it off unless the place gets insufferably hot. Perhaps— But allowing she does show it, what then?" He clenched his hand. "Vanity, pride—those are her weaknesses. I must compromise her so completely that to save herself she will have to work with me. She's a fool, and she loves the venturesome, provided she thinks she won't be caught. She believes she can manage men, in any and all situations. We'll see! She'll go to dinner if she can give her aunt a good excuse. She must be dining somewhere else. A girl of that kind always has a friend to use as a blind, either because she's good-natured and unsuspecting, or because she wants a return in kind. How am I to get hold of her without running up against the other girl?"

Like Napoleon, he possessed the faculty of concentrating his thoughts in the most distracting environments. With the whole energy of his physical and mental strength he set himself to frame his plans amid the hubbub of

the afternoon tea. The better to excuse his absorption he opened his notebook, and became apparently engrossed in jotting down something from time to time—a trick not infrequent in this circle of idea-mongers.

Meanwhile Philippa was deploying her forces to surround and capture Mrs. Testly Durham for her proposed dinner.

When could she and dearest Victoria come? It must be soon. What! all the week engaged? They must set their own date, then—such busy people! Oh, yes, she knew they must be fairly importuned with invitations—but this was different; friends from childhood. So glad dear Victoria had at last come home!

“Dear Victoria,” who fully appreciated the situation, smiled sweetly at Mrs. Durham’s struggles in the well-known net.

“Let us say next Thursday, then,” she finally put in, with decision.

Mrs. Durham’s mouth opened to remind Victoria of the Gordons’ poster party, but a dig from a neatly shod foot caught her just in time and turned the reminder to a cordial acceptance.

Victoria broached her puzzle. “Who is the man you came in with, Philippa? I’ve seen him somewhere, or else he looks like someone I have seen, but I can’t place him, and my brain is softening from the strain.”

Philippa brightened; she was delighted to blow the trumpet of her protégé’s prowess. “Mr. Valdeck. Such a dear! He’s quite after your own heart, so charming, so cultivated, so well-bred. He belongs to a well-known Polish family, and is wealthy. He is traveling for pleasure, under an incognito, of course, to avoid newspaper reporters and that sort of thing. Oh, he is a very serious, retiring sort of fellow, in spite of his social position. The Pointue girls gave him letters of introduction—one to me, of course—Consuelo Pointue and I are close friends, you know. He has been a great success. All of our set have received him. You must meet him. Where is he, I wonder? I thought he

would follow me over here. Madame Despard must have seized on him to entertain some wallflower—he is so good-natured. Between ourselves,” she added, in her desire to aggrandize her adorer, “he has an important mission over here; not officially, you know, and you mustn’t refer to it. His telling me was quite confidential.”

Mrs. Durham smiled. “You may rest assured that Miss Claudel and I will keep the secret as you would yourself.”

“Oh, I’m sure of it,” Philippa went on, unconscious of the speaker’s mild irony. “I am an excellent judge of people. I can count my mistakes on my fingers.”

“But all this,” Victoria objected, ruefully, “doesn’t help me in the least. I cannot place the man, and I feel the memory nagging at consciousness, as if it were connected with something important. Don’t you hate that sensation?”

As Mrs. Durham nodded assent, a servant approached Philippa with a folded card.

“Wait for me one moment,” she begged, “till I see what this is.”

Two lines in pencil in Valdeck’s hand. “Russian consul just come; must slip off. Join me in vestibule, please—undiscovered.”

With a delighted sense of her importance and the romance of the situation, Philippa blushed with eagerness and excitement. “I’m so sorry,” she exclaimed, hurriedly; “I must go at once. Do remember Thursday next; I’m coming to call before, of course. Good-bye, Mrs. Durham, I’m so glad to have met you; good-bye. Oh, Victoria, will you fasten this hook for me, like a dear?” She leaned forward, holding out the soft fur edges of her cape collar, revealing as she did so the elaborate velvet appliqué of her bodice and the exquisite beauty of an ancient pin that nestled at her throat.

Victoria’s eyes rested on it for one breathless second, then her voice came strange and sharp as she fairly jerked out the question: “Where did you get that?”

"Goodness!" thought Philippa, quickly, "I can't tell her I accepted such a valuable present from Valdeck—can't even excuse it by old friendship. I'm engaged to Morton; I forgot to tell her—but now isn't the time." An imperceptible pause covered this calculating. "Why, Victoria," she said, gently, "what makes you so savage? It's an old thing of mother's. I found it not long ago among some letters and keepsakes of hers. Pretty, isn't it?"

Philippa's voice was full of sentiment and sorrow. To hear her one felt instinctively the desire to protect this motherless girl, and to pass quickly from a subject that might cause sad recollections. Victoria controlled the strong emotion that shook her.

"Oh," she said, awkwardly, "it's very handsome and most unusual."

"I must go," Philippa mourned, and with an affectionate backward glance, moved toward her hostess. "Such a charming time, my dear Mrs. Despard. You must come to my Thursdays. I hear the Russian consul is here; do point him out to me."

"Is he?" queried madame, languidly. "I don't know, I'm sure; someone must have brought him. Yes, do come again."

"Let's go," said Victoria, shortly, as Philippa left them; "I want to talk to you; I want to get out of this." Mrs. Durham looked astonishment, but Victoria persisted.

"Let's leave immediately, if you don't mind—that is—I'm upset."

Mrs. Durham sent a diagnosing glance over her charge, and nodded, her face becoming serious. "Is anything the matter?" she asked.

"I don't know," answered Victoria, helplessly; "I wish I did."

Mrs. Durham promptly linked her arm through her friend's and bore her rapidly down the room to where the hostess stood talking in the centre of a little attentive circle, and they made their adieus.

As the friends left the hubbub of the tea and sought the shelter of Mrs. Durham's studio, neither of them spoke. It was not until the

cigarette had gone out several times and Victoria had walked the floor sturdily for many minutes that the floodgates were opened. During the interval Mrs. Durham settled herself in one of the huge leather club chairs and watched Victoria with attention.

"Here goes!" Victoria broke out suddenly, flinging herself heavily into the chair opposite. She plunged into the story of the Auray robbery, described the Englishman minutely, the countess and her jewels, the nurse's story and its contradictions, the death of the child, the fruitless efforts of the police, Sonia's constant annoyance at being called on to identify arrested persons bearing no possible resemblance to the criminal, her own return to America, her meeting with Valdeck and her difficulty in remembering where she had seen him—crowned by the sudden revealing glimpse of the countess's brooch on the breast of Philippa Ford, and the instant flash of recollection that, in spite of the change of hair and the disappearance of the mustache, showed her the mock O'Farrell in Valdeck the Pole.

Her friend heard her out without interruption, proof positive of a most unusual female intellect. When at last Victoria paused, Mrs. Durham began tearing the edge of a near-by magazine into infinitesimal bits, a habit she frequently indulged during her moments of concentration.

"First, are you absolutely sure about the pin?" she asked, presently, more as an opening wedge than a question.

"Absolutely."

"And the man?"

"Still more so—if that is possible."

"Miss Ford said it had belonged to her mother. There might be two such pins in the world."

Victoria shook her head. "And two such men?—no! Besides, Philippa is a born liar; it isn't even second nature with her, it's first nature. She didn't want me to think she had accepted such a present from a mere acquaintance; but I have known her to take as much and more from any

man who would offer it to her. She recognizes no obligation in it. She sees it merely as tribute paid to her superlative beauty and wit. She would take the Koh-i-nur from the devil himself, ten minutes after they were introduced."

Mrs. Durham laughed. "It's no use cautioning her, then, concerning Valdeck. As far as I can see, the French consul is the person for you to notify; let him take charge of the case. If it's a question of extradition, it's up to him; but you will have to be absolutely sure of your quarry. Where is Sonia Palintzka?"

"In Paris."

"Do you think he recognized you?"

Victoria paused. "I'm sure I don't know. If he did, he hid it well. But I noticed that he didn't come anywhere near me after he once saw me staring at him, and I'm morally certain that the card the man brought Philippa was from him, accounting for his desertion of her, and making a rendezvous. Oh, Philippa would go anywhere if you made the situation sufficiently dramatic."

"Well—" and Mrs. Durham put down the dilapidated magazine—"I wouldn't fret, dear. To-morrow I'd call on the consul and lay the matter before him. He will probably have the man watched, perhaps get an order to search his apartments. More probably he'll do nothing at all until he cables to his chief of police. If the Vernon-Lamion what-you-may-call-ums are of sufficient importance, they'll follow the matter up; if not, they'll drop it. Anyway, you will have done all that can be expected of you. It's a curious coincidence, though—I'll use it in my next novel."

The mere statement of the case had relieved Victoria's feelings, the events sank to their proper proportion with reference to herself, the shock of recognition was past, and the world was proceeding much as usual.

"I'm glad I told you about it," she went on. "One cannot see a thing in one's mind as clearly as a thing taken out, made concrete and put into

words. It then becomes an entity you can turn over and consider. When it's jammed inside your skull it takes up all the available room."

She stretched herself and relaxed with the graceful completeness of a cat, nerves and muscles let down from their tension.

"Anne," she spoke again, "I now understand why you keep your work-room so bare and plain. It makes one clear and concise in one's thoughts. I could never have stated my case so quickly—pardon a little bouquet that I throw myself—or so well at Madame Despard's, for instance. There is nothing like large, bare spaces to make one clear-sighted and simple."

Mrs. Durham rose and looked at her watch. "Perfectly right, my dear Victoria. I've often wanted to hire a prairie."

III

PHILIPPA thrust Valdeck's card into her bosom as she left the studio, and with a beating heart descended to her rendezvous. She found Valdeck apparently absorbed in the study of the index board in the lower hall.

"Were you recognized?" she asked, in her deepest conspirator voice.

He started. "No, I think not, and besides, he really knows nothing; but I am anxious to keep away from all possible hostile observation."

"Of course," said Philippa, rather disappointed that the trouble was not more dramatic. She glanced at him sharply as they emerged into the street, and her quick intuition showed her that Valdeck had been more disturbed than he was willing to own.

"You are not telling me all," she said, reproachfully. "You have had a shock—oh, yes, I can see it; you can't deceive me—and can't you trust me? I thought you said you did, implicitly."

He appeared to hesitate, then abruptly signaled a passing hansom.

"You will drive with me, Philippa?" he said, with a sudden author-

ity. "I will tell you, but we must be alone. You can spare me an hour? It's now half-past five."

Philippa considered a moment. "Very well. Tell him to drive round the Park; it's so dark we won't be noticed."

She stepped lightly into the carriage, putting her skirts into place as she settled back, and affectionately making room for him. He gave his orders, and swung himself in beside her with the athletic ease she so much admired.

"Now, what is it?" she demanded, as the hansom jerked forward.

"Not yet. It's a horrid story, and I hate to say anything."

"Get it over with, then," she suggested, archly.

"I am going away soon," he said, slowly, "very soon. There are so many reasons why I should. I wonder I have stayed so long. Wisdom and duty bid me depart, and yet I have not the courage to go."

Philippa experienced one of the few real sensations of her life. The stab of this announcement so surprised her by its acute pain that she turned white to the lips, and the jarring of the carriage having displaced her hat, she did not think to readjust it—an oversight not to be credited by those who knew her well. She was silent a moment, unwilling to trust her voice. At last she moistened her lips and managed to ask, "Why?" with a poor semblance of carelessness.

"First, my work, my duty, then—because—as you must have realized, dear—because I love you, and I must not interfere with your life and your future. I have nothing to offer; my fortune is pledged to the cause. I am practically banished; I live a life of forced concealment and intrigue that must make me everywhere, sooner or later, an object of suspicion. I can never hope for any real position to offer you. Besides, I have made you my ideal. I want to see you realize the hopes I have of you. I must see you queen among women, the courted, fêted, admired leader of your world. You will marry—ah, yes, I have

even dwelt on that—and it must be with one who will appreciate you and surround you with the luxuries you deserve; who will supply the wants of your wonderful mind with the best that literature, art and social intercourse can offer; who will give you the opportunity to develop into the wonderful woman you will be—for you are yet only a promise of what I hope for you."

He paused and gazed on her white profile, softened in the dusk until it toned into the dark background like some delicately painted miniature. This wholesale burning of incense at her shrine was as meat and drink to Philippa. From any man it would have been welcome, but coming from Valdeck it was food celestial. Moreover, a sense of relief filled her. She would not be obliged to refuse him; he was advancing from his standpoint the arguments she might have been forced gently to insinuate into his mind from hers. All she had to do now was to play her game—a beautiful, heart-broken game. He need not know or guess her engagement to Morton Conway. The pang of his announced determination to depart had passed away, leaving her once more her old, calculating self.

But he wouldn't go; she would manage that. Of course, he must leave sooner or later, but later—much later.

He took her hand and held it. She did not resist, but turned her blue eyes on his.

"I often wonder," she said, softly, "if it would have been better had we never met."

He entered a vigorous protest. "No. This meeting is, and always will be, the crown of my life, the jewel in my heart. Whatever the cost, it cannot cost too much."

A long silence ensued, in which the hansom jangled gaily through the dim poem of the twilight, punctuated at intervals by the staring lamps of the driveway or the passing flash of carriage lights.

"Will you do me a great favor?" he asked, suddenly. "Dine with

me to-night. You can manage it; I know you can, you are so clever."

Philippa jumped. "Suppose we should be seen?"

"I'll manage that, if you will trust me."

She pressed his hand gently. "Trust you, of course; but it's awfully improper."

"I know it's not conventional; that's why I called it a great favor. But I can't let you go yet, dear. You see I have no ambitions or hopes for myself—only for you. I am to live by the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table, only by such scraps of your time as you will throw to me. You need never fear that I shall importune you. But to-night—when I have just told you my secret, when you have been so kind and patient—I want this one evening with you to cherish and remember; just to break bread with you alone, to clink glasses with you alone, sit opposite you, as if I had the right to sit there always."

Philippa hesitated. "Are you sure we won't be seen?"

"Positive! Why, I would give my life sooner than have one word said against you, and I know as well as you what the world is. The world never believes in a pure and disinterested love—it does not wish to; it has itself to excuse by the faults of others."

"How true!" she murmured. Then she brightened with glee at thought of the forbidden pleasure of the tête-à-tête dinner. "Listen. Tell the man to drive to — West Fifty-seventh street; that's Laura Denison's. They have a telephone. I'll call Aunt Lucy up and tell her I'm staying to dinner and going to the play. She'll ask to speak to Laura, to verify—oh, she's horribly suspicious—but I'll fix Laura, for I've helped her out lots of times when she was engaged to Tom. You must promise to get me home by half-past ten or eleven, for auntie is going to dine at the Bishops', and she'll be home early—they are such bores."

"You are the best girl in the world." His voice choked a little. "I shall never forget your kindness

to me, a poor beggar whom you hardly know in point of time."

"What is time?" she demanded with fine scorn; "only what we make it. I knew you as soon as I saw you. I am never mistaken in character, and you were doubly clear to me through sympathy."

He pushed up the little door of communication with the driver and gave his orders. The hansom paused, wheeled, and started off once more into the darkness. The rest of the way they said little, but sat staring into the gloaming world outside, still hand in hand, till the glare of winking arc lights startled them into formality.

In the excitement of the declaration Philippa had forgotten the trouble he had promised to reveal, but the recollection smote her, and she questioned him suddenly. This abruptness of attack was the result of years of experiment. She had discovered that by firing a point-blank question or stating a good guess with decision the truth was forthcoming in nine cases out of ten. The questioned persons were startled either into spoken admissions and explanations, or they showed symptoms easy for a shrewd person to interpret. To her surprise, she learned nothing further from his face or voice.

"Later," was all he answered.

If there had been any wavering in her decision to dine with him, it was past now; her curiosity had pushed down the balance in his favor.

The cab drew up before a handsome house, at which Philippa glanced knowingly, collecting her forces before going into action.

"Wait round the corner," she ordered, as she stepped to the pavement, and turned to mount the wide stone steps.

The driver obeyed, and Valdeck laughed silently as he noticed the force of habit back of the command. Evidently, "Wait round the corner" was a familiar phrase with this Philippa.

Meanwhile the object of his plans had been admitted to the elaborate hall

by an elaborate butler who invited her to be seated in a parlor whose elaborateness was of the newest and most gorgeous variety, of the sort that secretly filled Philippa with delight, though verbally she professed to scorn the upholsterer's style of furnishing as a sort of Cook's personally conducted tour in house-decoration.

Mrs. Denison entered, all smiles and rustle. She matched her abode perfectly, from the curled and undulated erection of her pale hair to the belaced and bejeweled gray brocade of her tea gown.

"My dearest girl!" she exclaimed; "are you going to stay to dinner? I'm delighted. You are so good to think of our mourning and how housed we are!"

Philippa embraced her friend rapturously. "How sweet you do look! These grays and blacks are so becoming. You ought to kill off an uncle every few months."

"You dreadful girl!" smiled Mrs. Denison.

"But I'm not going to dine with you to-night, dear," Philippa continued, "for I want to dine at a love of a little bohemian restaurant—oh, it's quite proper—with a party you know, but Aunt Lucy wouldn't hear of it, you see. So I thought you might let me telephone from here and tell her I was dining with you—won't you, dear? Auntie is such a stickler for etiquette, and I can't make her understand that everybody nice is going to such places now."

"Why, of course," Mrs. Denison volunteered, completely deceived by the excuse. "I'll telephone to Mrs. Ford myself; that will be better yet. But do come in and dine any evening when you have nothing to do. It's so lonesome all by ourselves, and as we inherited so much by old Mr. Ventimore's will, we positively can't go about—it looks so heartless."

"But think how you would have really mourned if he hadn't left you anything, you ungrateful girl! You're a dear, just the same, and I'm everlastingly obliged to you. You'll telephone at once, won't you? Auntie

dines with the Bishops, and she'll leave the house by seven, they live so far up-town."

"At once, of course. Run on and have a good time, dearie. When we are able to go about, Tom and I are going to give some really bohemian things ourselves; a tomale party or a cake-walk, you know; so get all the points you can for us."

Mrs. Denison conducted her guest to the portières, where the elaborate butler took her in hand and ceremoniously opened the doors as she passed out. She walked decorously down the steps till she heard the bang of both doors; then she hurried, with joyful anticipation, to the waiting carriage. She jumped in gaily and settled herself.

"I've fixed it," she announced, with childish delight.

Valdeck looked his thanks, and called to the driver, who awaited instructions, "To Gagano's."

Philippa started. "Oh," she asked, "do you think that's quite safe?"

He nodded. "Quite. We'll have a private room, and I'll manage it so you won't be seen."

The hansom rattled on, taking by his direction an unfashionable, smaller vein in the city's system of circulation, in preference to the greater and more frequented arteries. Philippa had by this time turned to her muttons with intent to shear to the very last thread of wool. Curiosity stalked hungry through her mind.

"Do tell me what was wrong. It troubles me to see you troubled, and we must get it over with; otherwise it will lie between us and make us both uncomfortable."

But still he was not ready to divulge, and turned to his love for her and descriptions of her loveliness and how it affected him—divining that her own adored person was the only subject likely to distract her curiosity. In this he sufficiently absorbed her till the cab turned down a quiet side street and drew up before an unpretentious door, over which an illuminated sign announced, "Gagano's Restaurant."

Delighted excitement thrilled Philippa as she pulled up her collar and drew down her hat, with the traditional gestures of disguise.

Valdeck restrained her as she gathered her belongings preparatory to alighting. "Stay here," he said, quietly. "I'll go up and arrange so you won't have to wait in hallways." He paid the driver, ran up the steps and disappeared between the ground-glass doors.

Several minutes elapsed, during which Philippa from the darkness of her shelter looked out with fear and curiosity at the men and women who passed in the street or hurried into the restaurant. At last Valdeck came rapidly down the steps, glancing sharply up and down the street as he did so, assisted her to alight and escorted her into the house.

A narrow corridor opened before her, stairs loomed upward, with an obsequious waiter bowing on the landing. A door to the right gave a glimpse of the main dining-room. It stood ajar, and annoyed at the oversight, she turned her face away and fled up the stairs. The floor above showed another narrow hall, where busy servants ran to and fro. Serving tables stood against one wall, opposite which opened a dozen or more doors, many of them adorned with small placards bearing the word "Taken," in gilt letters. To Philippa it was all evil and mysterious, and filled her with trepidation and delight. The sound of smothered laughter, the faint clink of glasses and plates, the sight of champagne bottles cooling in the silver-plated buckets on the floor—all impressed her with a sense of delicious naughtiness. The obsequious waiter ushered them into a tiny room, and discreetly closed the door.

Philippa looked about her with interest. A window, heavily curtained, formed the upper end, a divan ran the length of one side wall, opposite a huge mirror covering half the room. A table neatly set for two stood in the centre, adorned by a scanty bunch of carnations. Every-

thing was worn. The mirror was scratched, the velvet of the upholstery showed the nap, the carpet was dulled by the frequent upsetting of viands, the dull-red cartridge paper of the visible wall space bore names, initials and mottoes in pencil, with here and there a caricature or a sketchy drawing, some of them not without merit. The air was hot, the only ventilation being a small electric fan, now motionless, fixed in one corner near the lights. A room at once attractive and repellent, but to Philippa, soaked in French novels, it was the realization of the baleful and be-lauded *cabinet particulier*. Valdeck apologized for the shabbiness of his hospitality, but pointed out the fact that a meeting with any of their acquaintances would be practically out of the question.

The waiter, after discreetly knocking, entered with cocktails on a silver tray, and presented the bill of fare and wine-card with a gesture worthy of Lord Chesterfield.

Valdeck acquitted himself of the task of selection, ordered the champagne to be *brut* and *frappé*, and by his evident knowledge of things culinary went up several points in his guest's estimation.

Left alone once more, he seated Philippa on the divan, took his place on the chair opposite, persuaded her to remove not only her wraps but her hat, and showed himself a thoughtful and attentive host. Presenting her with the cocktail, he bowed gravely.

"*A vos beaux yeux*," he murmured, tenderly.

She drank the beverage, and as its glow began to course through her veins she raised her smiling eyes to his.

"What would our friends think of this?" she asked, again with that delightful *ingénue* blush of hers.

"Just at present I don't in the least care," he answered, gaily; "but I promise you they won't be able to say anything."

The waiter appeared with oysters.

"Are you still determined to go away?" she asked, after a moment's silence.

"I ought to," he answered, uncertainly.

"But that's not the question. *Are* you, I said?" and she raised her violet eyes to his face, half wistful, half mocking.

"To explain just why," he said, gravely, "I must tell you. I was taken aback when I saw you this afternoon sitting with a girl I never expected to see again, a girl whom I saw last in Europe; whose gray eyes I shall never forget."

Philippa dropped her oyster fork, and her eyes dilated.

"Victoria Claudel! For goodness' sake, what do you mean?"

He appeared to hesitate, and the conversation ceased as the waiter served the soup.

"My dear girl," he resumed, after a moment, "I must, to protect myself and your good opinion of me, do a thing that is considered, and rightly considered, dastardly among men. I must speak ill of a woman to whom I am indebted—more than indebted."

Philippa turned scarlet, her heart beat heavily. Here, indeed, was a dramatic situation.

"She is, I know from your manner toward her, your very dear friend," he went on, "and you must not only forgive me for what I have to say, but both for my sake and hers, promise me the most rigid secrecy, the most absolute silence——"

"I swear!" cried Philippa, her cheeks crimsoning with excitement.

"—even to her. She must not know that I have told you. But I know what a woman's jealousy can be and is. I know that Victoria would do all in her power to harm me. She is vindictive beyond belief, and all her intelligence, her strength and will go into her plans. I do not know that she followed me, but I fear it. Now that she has found me, she undoubtedly will do her best to oust me from my position here. What stories she will circulate I cannot guess as yet; but I know from past experience what she can do. One of your poets wrote the words, 'Nor hell a fury like a woman scorned.' And to you,

Philippa, to you she will certainly come with her accusations of me, for she will inevitably see that you have absorbed my life. Whatever I am, whatever I may have been, you know that you are my love, my only love, and I cannot bear that she should turn you from me."

Philippa was splendid. Holding out her hand across the table, she took his in a firm and friendly grasp. "You were right to trust me with your secret. She cannot hurt you in my eyes. But what shall we do if she tries to circulate anything against you among others? She has the advantage—she is known here, you are not. You cannot tell the reason of her hatred of you; that would be unforgivable in everyone's eyes. Yet if you go away she may wither your reputation at her ease."

"If you stand my friend," he went on, "it is all I ask of fate."

"But she must not injure you."

Again the waiter interrupted, but Philippa was beyond paying any attention to his presence. Valdeck shrugged his shoulders.

"It can't be helped, unless, perhaps, you find out and tell me in what direction her enmity will show itself. I might plan to meet it. But that would entail too much on you. You could never play the ignorant, let her confide in you and show her hand. You are too open and clear a nature to meet the wiles of a woman of her stamp."

"Indeed I can—trust me. I'll know every plan, I'll fathom her every thought, I'll not leave her for a moment. If she doesn't come directly to me—and she is quite clever enough to work through other people, if she imagines I know anything or suspect her honesty—why, then I'll go to her. I give you my word that you shall know just what is afoot as soon as she does herself. It will be a little thing to do in return for your friendship."

Valdeck lost himself in a maze of thanks and adoring admiration.

"Isn't it strange," she murmured, "isn't it wonderful, that things should work out this way? I understand it

all now. She pretended to be puzzled as to where she had seen you before—asked me who you were—to sound me, you see, concerning our relations. She seemed absent-minded and ill at ease. And then, when I left her, she happened to see the pin you gave me. She was really overcome, turned pale, and fairly shook me, demanding where I got it."

"Yes," he nodded, reminiscently. "She knew how much I thought of that. I remember she once asked me to let her wear it, and I refused. She never quite forgave me. Of course, when she saw it in your possession she was enraged. What did you say?"

Philippa colored. "Well, I could not tell her the truth, you know. I said it was an old thing of my mother's, but I saw she knew better."

He laughed shortly. "Knew better!" Inwardly he congratulated himself on his judgment in taking the bull by the horns. He was sure now to be informed of whatever danger threatened him, of what steps would be taken. Another week, and it made little difference what came out. Till then he must play the game carefully. He looked at Philippa, and felt grateful to his lucky stars that she was so fair to look on and so pliable to his will. It enabled him to throw himself heartily into his part. He always was fortunate with his women confederates, conscious or unconscious, he commented. There was Eugenia; what a jewel the woman was! It was unfortunate that the police had suspected her—it prevented his seeing her as often as he would have liked.

Squab and salad were served, and Valdeck came over to the divan and sat beside Philippa.

"Let's drop all this for the present," he said, gently taking her hand; "let's talk of you—it's a pleasanter subject. Only tell me that this confidence hasn't completely barred me from your respect. But what can you know of a man's life and temptations!" He bowed his head on his free hand and looked gloomily into the mirror opposite.

She followed his glance and gazed

approval on their common reflections. How handsome he was! and how well she was looking herself! The wine and excitement had flushed her cheeks and lighted her eyes with a starry radiance; a dew of perspiration had dampened her hair and ruffled it into soft curls. Her satisfaction in her own appearance made her the more ready to admire him, made her the more lenient to his avowed fault; besides, what woman ever scorns to triumph over a rival in any man's estimation?

"A woman's intuition permits her to divine conditions that are not actually within her experience," she answered, softly, sipping the glass of champagne before her with grave appreciation, "and I think I can fairly say that you have not fallen in my estimation. One learns—" and here Philippa looked vastly worldly-wise and bitter—"that none can expect a man's life to be as spotless as a woman's, or even a woman's as spotless as it ought to be. I must own, though, that what you tell me of Victoria would surprise most of her friends more than it does me. I have never quite held her in my esteem to the point of absolute trust. There is a suggestion of defiance in her bohemianism. She permits herself liberties that are not wise. She lunches with any man she likes, whenever she pleases, in the most public places. I often used to speak to her about it, and she always resented it, and maintained that as long as a woman stayed in broad daylight, and in a public place, she was sufficiently chaperoned. But such things show a disregard of public opinion that sooner or later leads to graver offenses, not only against the laws of convention, but against the laws of God."

Valdeck hid a smile with his serviette. She was too delicious, this girl. His curiosity began to rise concerning this Victoria, whose character he had just destroyed. Evidently she was a woman of independence and intelligence. It was rather a pity to spoil her reputation; but it had to be done. Moreover, he reflected, was it not a

custom current in society, was it not sufficient to justify any calumny, that the person thus punished should happen to know things derogatory to the calumniator? "The greater the truth the greater the libel" works more ways than one.

"Philippa," he said, apparently coming out of a brown study, "you are the sweetest, dearest woman in the world. I shall never forget your kindness and charity, as I can never forget your loveliness and truth. My lady of goodness! I believe there is not another such combination of beauty, brains and sincerity on the face of the earth." "How she swallowed it all!" he added, to himself.

She drew out her tiny jeweled watch and glanced at it with a pout. "We must go soon," she murmured, reluctantly. "Aunt Lucy keeps such close count of my every movement, and—" she turned her innocent eyes to his face—"I do so hate deception."

"And she really believes it," he thought, delightedly; "she honestly thinks herself the soul of truth!"

"Not yet," he begged, aloud; "a few moments more or less count very little to Aunt Lucy, while to me—you don't realize what they are to me! And when shall I see you again? To-morrow? Where?"

Philippa remembered, with annoyance, that Morton Conway was coming to take her driving in the afternoon. She couldn't very well refuse. She had a luncheon engagement, and her dressmaker in the morning, dinner and theatre party at the Wellsleys—oh, dear! The dressmaker would have to wait.

"I'll go over to Victoria's early in the morning," she said, slowly; "about ten. I can't very well go earlier. I'll make her tell me what she intends to do, and—let me see—suppose you wait in the Turkish room at the Waldorf, at twelve. If by any chance I should be detained, I'll call you up on the telephone at half-after. I'll be there, though," she added, looking her sweetest.

"You are so good!" he said again. "Now that I have the assurance

you will not believe anything that will be said against me, now that you know the very worst that can be said with truth, I can't tell you how relieved I am. Confession lightens one's load wonderfully. The Catholic doctrine is founded on a real human need. If everyone loved God as I love you——"

"Oh," cried Philippa, interrupting with almost terrified emphasis, "don't, don't say such things—to compare me to the Deity!"

She was honestly shocked, for Philippa was very devout on Sundays and in Lent.

"Forgive me," he begged, humbly. "I did not mean to hurt your beautiful faith. Unfortunately, I can believe in nothing—only in you and my duty to my fellow man."

She was not displeased. Atheism sat not unbecomingly on manly shoulders, though, to her thinking, it was to the last degree bad form in a woman. Religion, like one's evening dress, was the proper thing, and indispensable for certain occasions, though she attributed her religious fervor to quite different emotions.

The more Valdeck turned the leaves of his companion's character the greater was his amusement. It was like reading some written study of the ultra-feminine. It might be worth one's trouble to sketch out a romance with her for the sake of watching her clockwork. But time pressed; another week, and he would have dropped from this crude sphere as completely as if he had never existed—to reincarnate himself under another name, in another country, and build up an excellent reputation that would shield the sources of his wealth, if all went well.

Philippa rose and began the various adjustments of hairpins and garments always premonitory of her going forth.

"Must you go now?" he asked. "I won't tease; you know best—but must you?"

She nodded, almost sadly.

He bowed his head in acquiescence

to the inevitable, and rang the bell for the waiter. Hastily settling his bill, he turned to her once more. She was carefully prodding her hat with a topaz-headed pin. As she studied her face in the glass he crossed over and stood beside her. She thrilled with his presence.

"You are so beautiful!" he whispered. "May I?" and before she could protest he had folded her in his arms, turned her flushed face to his, and kissed her on the mouth.

For an instant she yielded to his arm, resting her head on his breast for the infinitesimal fraction of a second. A quivering delight mounted from her heart and dimmed her eyes. But in a moment she was herself again.

"Mr. Valdeck!" she said, severely. "And I trusted you in coming here!"

The tone was perfect. "Just as if she hadn't been waiting for that all the evening," he thought, admiringly. "She's a genius." He kept silent, only looking at her with humble, dog-like eyes, as a hound reproved for showing too much exuberance of affection.

With a petulant movement she caught up her jacket, pouted, smiled, looked at him and then at it, and finally held it out with an inimitable gesture of amused reluctance.

"You'll have to help me into it, I suppose."

He sprang forward, took the outstretched garment and clasped it fondly.

"No, no, it isn't for you to keep," she laughed.

The operation of getting into the wrap was prolonged and difficult, numerous hooks had to be attended to and sleeves smoothed, to all of which Philippa laughingly submitted, unconscious of the deft unfastening of her treasured jewel, and its sudden disappearance down a concealing sleeve. At the door he took her hand and kissed it fervently.

"Let me go first, dear," he said, passing in front. "I want to see if the coast is clear. I told the waiter to call a cab."

Feeling more deliciously wicked than ever, Philippa crept through the hall and down the stairs. All was quiet, and with the glee of a schoolboy who successfully carries out a dangerous prank, she sprang into the waiting carriage.

IV

MRS. DURHAM opened the door to Victoria's familiar knock. "Well?" she said, removing a thick cork penholder from her mouth. She wore a gingham apron, plentifully besprinkled with ink stains, and her hair showed signs of her recent labors.

Victoria threw down her muff and slung her fur collar across the room. "I saw the consul, and he has taken the matter up; but it seems there is red tape enough to strangle us all. I'm sorry I ever touched the thing."

"What is he going to do?"

Victoria subsided into a chair. "About what you suggested. He is going to cable half a dozen proper authorities—have Valdeck shadowed, if they think best. I suggested having his rooms searched, but there are all sorts of difficulties. He's a Russian subject, or claims to be; the consul intimated all sorts of horrifying international complications. He seemed disgusted that I had brought the thing to him, and I must confess I'm sorry I did. If I hadn't seen that child die I don't think I should have touched it, but—well, it's done now; the machinery is going."

"Yes," said Mrs. Durham, whirling about in her office chair; "it now remains to be seen who will be drawn in, and what sort of a sausage will be the result."

"I'm inclined to think I shall season it largely myself," Victoria answered, ruefully. "Philippa is going to make it warm for me when she finds herself dragged in by the ears—and the brooch, with her pathetic little story about dear mother's heirloom, too."

Mrs. Durham chuckled, but sobered

suddenly. "Be very careful," she advised, "how you go about that. She would be an unpleasant enemy. She, as the challenged party, has the choice of weapons, and unless I vastly misjudge her, they will be of a type that you wouldn't soil your hands with."

"I know it. Oh, why didn't you head me off? I'll get myself and everyone else into a hornets' nest."

"Because, dear, I believe that dangerous animals should not be left at large; such creatures owe their immunity to the trouble they might give lazy hunters."

"And besides," added Victoria, "it isn't your fight, and it will be entertaining to watch."

Mrs. Durham swung completely about and faced her friend. "You have such a disagreeable little way of dragging the Sunday clothes off my rag dolls, but it's invaluable from a literary standpoint."

"Apparently I'm to be a sort of god from the machine for everyone's benefit but my own," murmured Victoria. "But the Philippa question is serious."

A knock at the door startled them both, and Victoria rose reluctantly to answer the summons.

"Good morning, dear," a well-known voice trilled, gaily. "I stopped in early, as you told me you were always home. May I come in, or do I disturb?"

"We were just talking of you." Victoria's expression was composite.

"Speaking of angels," Mrs. Durham added, rising to greet their visitor.

Philippa entered, more gorgeous than ever, rustling aggressively in her silk petticoats. Her light tan cloth gown, with its cleverly combined touches of gold and brown, set off her blond prettiness to perfection. She felt a glow of pleasure as she noted Victoria's disheveled appearance and the bespattered apron that concealed Mrs. Durham's graceful figure. She regarded her friend with a new and cruel interest, bred of last night's confidences. It was

delightful to feel that she held this girl's reputation in the hollow of her hand—this girl who had let her read scorn of her, Philippa's, life and character, this girl whose appearance had forced her to hedge and definitely engage herself when she had other more interesting occupations. Truly, it was a sweet morsel. Her musings gave her an expression half-sweet, half-sinister, and added a new tone of superiority to her voice. Victoria was instantly conscious of the change, but was too full of her story to wonder at its origin.

The talk touched only indifferent topics, as Mrs. Durham kept the ball rolling on things operative and literary. Then she rose, excusing herself gracefully on the plea of work, and left the friends alone. Victoria plunged into the subject next her consciousness.

"I hope," she said, "you won't be angry, but I've something to say about that pin you had on yesterday."

Philippa's face showed a kaleidoscope of expressions, but a painful recollection dominated.

"Do you know, Victoria, I lost it—I can't imagine how. I was dining last night at the Denisons', and when I got home it was gone. I can't imagine how; the fastening was secure. I must have pulled it off with my wraps. I'm heart-broken over it."

"Lost!" cried Victoria, aghast, seeing the one plank of her proof against Valdeck disappear into thin air. She looked closely at her friend. For once she did not question Philippa's truthfulness; the chagrin was genuine.

"It must be found!" she ejaculated, sharply. "It must! You see—" and she floundered into her explanations—"I know more about that pin than you can guess. I know that Mr. Valdeck gave it to you; I'll tell you all. Of course, you couldn't very well tell me before everybody there at the tea; I understood that perfectly. I admired the quick way you turned it off, and I ought to have

had more tact than to blurt out such a question—but that's just like me."

Philippa played amazement. "Why, Vic, what are you talking about? Are you insane?"

"I'm going to tell you the whole story," Victoria went on, disregarding the interruption, "and let you judge for yourself."

Philippa's thoughts during the recital were a series of repressed exclamations. "Heavens! she's accusing him of burglary! Did one ever hear of such vindictiveness! Lucius was right; she's a danger in petticoats! What a horrible lie! Oh, it's murder now! What next, I wonder. The wickedness of it! She's overstepping herself; nobody will believe that. Can such women live, to play with a man's life and character like this? She'd ruin him for vengeance! And the calm of her! She'll go to any length! Poor Lucius! How wise he was to tell me!" And running in and out of these comments, like an arabesque movement in a Persian rug, stood the Pharisee's thankfulness in every tone and variation. Never had Philippa felt more virtuous than now, as she beheld the iniquities of her friend's character in all their blackness. Yet she must contain her righteous indignation if she was to save Valdeck from the net that would be cast about him.

Victoria's story reached its climax. Philippa's mental exclamation points multiplied. "His mother's pin that he gave me out of his great love of me, a part of the plunder! What won't she say! The very idea! She ought to be buried alive for such infamy! Never mind, a day of retribution will come, and the dispensing hand of justice may be the small, white-gloved one lying here so meekly." She looked at the hand, meditatively.

"What will you do?" she asked at length, "for of course you will have to prove such a remarkable story."

Victoria described her visit to the French consulate, and the measures that would probably be taken.

Her listener's heart stopped beating.

"Detectives! A search! Impossible! The whole villainous plot was clear as day. Evidently Victoria knew of Valdeck's secret connection with the Polish Educational League. The money he was collecting he would be unable to explain without implicating himself and the generous patriots, without putting himself and them practically into the power of the Russian secret police. Valdeck had assured her that even in America there was no safety once their positions were well authenticated.

On fire to put him on his guard, she cut short the interview. She must go at once. She must warn him, must help him at any cost. Her manner was strangely abstracted, and to Victoria's amazement she did not try to defend her protégé, but took her leave with unaccustomed quiet. Victoria looked after her with puzzled eyes.

"Now what on earth—?" she began, aloud.

"What did she say?" came from Mrs. Durham, peeping in between the curtains of her room.

"Nothing at all. I don't understand it."

"Didn't get angry? didn't make any demur to your statements concerning 'dear mamma's' jewels?"

"She didn't seem really surprised, either, now that I come to think of it. I can't make it out." Victoria sighed wearily. "I wish I knew what she has up her sleeve—for she has something."

"Do you suppose," Mrs. Durham ventured, shrewdly, "that he has told her himself—oh, not the real thing, but some explanation?"

Victoria shook her head. "Hardly; it is too grave. It wouldn't do for him to block me by fighting fire with a fire sure to burn him just as badly."

"What then?"

"That's just it—I don't see any explanation. Oh, it's probably only imagination. She was quiet about it for the simple reason that she wasn't sufficiently interested. You know how one always attributes a deeper

motive than the apparent one because it seems too simple."

"That is the habit of wily people," said Mrs. Durham; "but, Vic, my dear, you are not of that kind. You are direct. That is your power and your charm. I'll back an impression of yours against three of my own, and I'm not so very modest and humble about my own penetration. My advice to you, my girl, is, if you feel there is a screw loose in the elegant Miss Ford, watch her. You are very apt to be right."

"I don't intend," said Victoria, rising, "to bother my head about it longer. Mr. Conway and I are going to lunch at the Casino. Don't you want to come?"

Mrs. Durham shook her head. "No; I can't. I have to be at Miss Allison's at two."

"I'm sorry. I'd like you two to be friends. He is the rarest thing in the world, a well-balanced enthusiast."

"You seem to admire him so much, why don't you marry him, Vic?"

"I'm altogether too fond of him for that," she answered, gravely.

Mrs. Durham nodded. "Yes, as one nears the years of—well, indiscretion, it's well to treasure an occasional illusion. It makes one think kindly of one's self, as well as of others."

"Besides," Victoria went on, occupied with her own chain of thought, "he keeps my mind too busy when we are together; I have no leisure to think of anything but the subject in hand. And I've always observed that to fall in love with a person there must be a possibility of an occasional silence, or at least a lull, then one's senses begin to take note. But with a person who keeps your intellect continually occupied there is no leisure for emotions. That's why you see so many clever people fall in love with stupid ones or those for whom they are entirely unfitted."

Twenty minutes later she was in sight of the low building situated in the centre of the Park. Morton was waiting for her, wandering up and down in the checkered light and shade

under the wistaria arbor, now bare and gray. His face lighted with affectionate greeting as he recognized the swing of her strong young body and the free stride of her walk.

"Hello, Empress of India, Queen of the Isles! I hope you're as hungry as I am."

She held out her hand in frank delight at his presence.

"Starved—and starving for a good, old-fashioned talk with you, too." She gave his shoulder a familiar pat, and they turned toward the restaurant. "It's like old times, isn't it? And I have so much to say that I'm positively choked."

He looked at her carefully, taking in every detail of her dress and person.

"You're looking extremely well, Vic. Do you know, I've often wondered why you haven't married."

She turned on him, sharply. "I say, what has got into you all to-day? Mrs. Durham has been sermonizing from that same text, and now you begin. What put it into your head? Are you contemplating marriage yourself?"

With her usual logic she had hit the nail on the head, and Morton, who was bursting to tell, had a struggle to prevent his secret slipping from him. He sought the usual refuge of exaggerated humor.

"Alas! the only girl I ever loved has refused to tell me when she'll marry me. There are others, I know, and I have even been told that I'm a catch; but somehow—well, my affairs aren't interesting. You tell me of yours. I had the table put here," he added, as he drew out her chair for her, "because I knew that you would insist on 'out of doors' if you froze for it; but the lunch is hot, so I'll let you have your way."

"Line of least resistance," she laughed. "By the way, speaking of resistance, I see you won your case."

He nodded. "Yes; but it was more trouble than it was worth. The law——"

"Tell me," she broke in, abrupt-

ly, "do you know anything about extradition? I've managed to get myself mixed up in a possible Franco-Russian-American row, and I'm beginning to be sorry for it."

"You'll be considerably more sorry before you're through, my dear, unsophisticated infant. You'll have subpoenas and things served on you."

She held up an appealing hand. "Don't! You make me feel like a dining-table."

"You'll feel more like the dinner, when they dish you up, young lady. How did you ever get mixed up in the thing?"

"That's the worst of it," Victoria answered, ruefully. "I did it. I've pushed the button, and I suppose it's opened the exposition. Yes, you might just as well settle back and listen, for I'm going to tell you the whole story. This is the fourth time in two days—Mrs. D., the French consul, Philippa Ford, and now, you."

"Why Miss Ford?" hastily inquired Morton.

"Because she was mixed up in it, too. I'm not shouting this about generally. I told Mrs. Durham because the thing struck me all of a heap, and I had to get it out or die. I told the French consul because I had to shift the responsibility. I told Philippa because I thought she ought to know, and I tell you because you are a sort of twin, and because I want your help. Bob is at college, and besides, he's too much of a boy to be of any use."

"Don't forget to eat," Morton observed, kindly; "nothing like nourishment when you have to act and think."

Victoria obediently devoured what was put before her as she went over the familiar story. She was too engrossed to notice that her unvarnished opinion of Philippa's character for veracity and honor wrought a sudden and subtle change in Morton's manner. He recalled Philippa's affectionate tributes to Victoria, and the first doubt that had ever dimmed his old and deep affection settled over his

heart. After all, Victoria was no better than the average woman swayed by jealousy, the fundamental fault; but he had always believed her above such pettiness and personal spite. He was far too loyal in his love to doubt Philippa for a moment. She stood on the altar he had built for her, free from all question. The queen could do no wrong, and since she was unspeakably good and true and honorable, there was only one other opinion open to him. Victoria had been mistaken in the matter of the pin, or misled by some chance resemblance of design. As far as the story concerned Valdeck he was more than ready to believe it. He had mistrusted the Pole from the first, and had watched with ever deepening dislike the mysterious stranger's advance into the good graces of his lady love.

Victoria finished her narration and sat silent, staring out across the bare court to the deserted trellis and the empty carriage sheds.

Morton was uncomfortable. To have detected Victoria in a meanness was a severe blow to him; he began to realize what an exalted opinion he had held of her. He had been foolish; women were women the world over—all but Philippa; his heart warmed at the thought of her.

"Are you sure you cannot be mistaken?" he asked at length. "Resemblances are extraordinary, you know, and in the matter of the pin, no sane jury would convict a man because of such a bit of circumstantial evidence. The same jeweler might have made many similar pieces. Why shouldn't Miss Ford's mother have possessed such a jewel?"

Victoria's laugh was short and of the kind termed nasty. "Because Philippa has been trotting Valdeck about with her, evidently for some months—and two and two make four."

"Miss Ford would hardly accept such a present from any man, and much less from one she hardly knew."

"How little you know Philippa!" retorted Victoria, with cool decision.

"I thought you were friends." The

tone of Morton's voice would have enlightened his hearer at any other time, but her absorption in her "case" blinded her for the moment.

"Friends!" she answered, with an expressive shrug, "friends—what do you call friends? I've known her for years—granted. She uses me—and thinks I don't know it. So she chooses to call me her darling and assumes that my attitude is one of adoration. It is not; I have told her so, frequently. She amuses me. In return for my usefulness she gives me a certain cynical satisfaction, an intellectual treat. She is a great actress of parlor comedy, worthy of the closest observation. If I were on the stage I should give years to the study of her method; it is pure, unalloyed, instinctive genius."

Every word of Victoria's speech carried with it her own condemnation to Morton's ears. It hurt him, stabbed him, tortured the fine affection that he had held so long. He wished to declare his position and champion his lady's cause, but his promise held him dumb. He stared unseeing at the bare Winter landscape before him. A short hour before it had not seemed unbeautiful, the pale-blue sky, the gray lacework of bare branches and the brown, snow-spotted lawns; the air had not seemed chill, nor the earth unkind. Now it was all unmitigated ugliness.

"I can't advise you, I'm afraid," he said, coldly; "but I'd be careful if I were you. It's no light matter to bring accusations against man or woman—you have that to learn."

She looked up, hurt that the quick, never-failing sympathy and understanding, the whole-souled appropriation of each other's griefs, joys and cares, which had been a feature of their friendship, should fail her now. A quick thought of her long absence and of possible divergences of character flashed over her. Her mobile face clouded sadly. She felt very shut out and alone. She, too, realized how much this association and companionship had meant to her; how she had idealized and turned to their

perfect friendship as a prop and stay. Her throat ached cruelly. So it was over, this dream of an earthly friendship! Something had deviated them from their parallel during her three years' absence, in spite of their constant correspondence. They had grown in different directions. Filled with a nameless sadness, they sat silent, and in the silence the breach widened; they looked at each other as passengers on passing ships might watch the breadth of separating waters increase with each pulse-beat of the engines.

Victoria rose hastily. "It's very late, Morton," she said, with an effort at cheerfulness. "You have your drive, you say, and I must go back to the studio. Does your road lead my way, or do we separate here?"

Morton glanced at his watch. "My horses are at the driving club; I'll walk down with you."

They walked fast and in silence for the most part, except for such desultory conversation as their mutual embarrassment seemed to make necessary. They parted with their old phrases of affection, but the hearty freedom had left them, and both felt it with a shock of loneliness.

Victoria turned toward her temporary home, and Morton made his way to the club, where he ordered his team with such dejection that even the hostler wondered. While he was waiting he went over the interview. He honestly believed that he looked at the case impersonally, for the bias lay too deep, was too much a part of himself for him to realize its presence. He would not admit the possibility of anything but the most angelic sentiments in Philippa. Philosophers have contended that real platonic affection between man and woman is impossible, yet he admitted to himself that the utter annihilation of all his respect for all his other friends could not have grieved him as did this suspicion of meanness in Victoria. To him she had always stood as a type of the "big and white," as his college slang briefly and picturesquely put it; and after all she was only small and

spotted like the rest of the world. He felt instinctively that he must readjust his valuation of all things.

The stamping of his horses on the wooden floor roused him, and he went to them with his usual slaps and sugar, mounted to the seat of his light run-about, and signed his readiness. With the opening of the sliding doors the friend vanished and the lover came. "When half-gods go, the gods arrive." Victoria the disappointing fled from his mind and made place for Philippa the perfect. His heart sang as he pulled up before the wide, old-fashioned front of the house, and his smile held all his love and trust enthroned as he saw her graceful figure step between the swinging doors and descend to meet him.

She looked up into his face with eyes of such superhuman innocence that his soul went out to her. And this was the woman Victoria had dared to accuse of lying, duplicity, venality, vanity, the quartet of feminine vices he most detested. Philippa, the downtrodden angel, appealed to all the chivalry in him. It was with a new and protecting tenderness that he assisted her to the place at his side. Heretofore she had dazzled and baffled him, now she was his to shield and comfort, and the joy of it was very keen.

"Well, dear?" she said, as they turned toward the Park.

"Very well, dear," he answered, happily. "And you?"

"I'm tired," she said, her voice full of the infantile, pathetic quality that so endeared her to those who didn't know her. "Let's see—I dined out last night, since you had your old class dinner to go to; and to-day I called on dear Victoria, and I have just been lunching with a lot of girls. Awfully stupid—I hate girls' affairs, anyway. They are all gossip and backbite, and I hate it so!"

Morton, in his thirst of her every look and movement, very nearly ran down a nurse and baby-carriage. She laughed indulgently and merrily. Life was very exciting and full just now; she almost forgave him for being engaged to her.

"What have you been doing all this while? You haven't accounted for your time yet, you know."

He touched up the off horse as he answered: "Class dinner last night, rather good fun; and this morning—well, just some business that wouldn't interest you; and then I took Victoria out to lunch at the Casino. After that I came for you."

Philippa divined at once that the "lie" was in circulation, and she took the bull by the horns.

"I suppose she took occasion to abuse Valdeck," she said, tentatively.

Morton was surprised.

"Yes, I intended to speak to you of it. She told me she had put you on your guard. You remember I told you, dear, that I hardly thought him a gentleman."

Philippa flamed. "Between saying a man isn't a gentleman and accusing him of murder and burglary there is a long stretch."

"Then you think she is entirely mistaken?"

Philippa hesitated. "You know how fond I was of her, and I know how much you thought of her; yet, Morton, dear—but I can't help it, I am forced to believe she is doing this thing out of sheer vindictiveness and personal spite. It hurts me more than I can tell you to say such a thing—but I can't help it, it's true." Her voice quivered, but how satisfying it was to say it!

Morton's heart stood still. "What makes you say that?" he asked. "Just what do you mean?"

"I can't very well tell you all. She knows that I guess the truth, and I suppose she will try to work me into the disgrace she is preparing for Valdeck, but I have you, Morton, and nothing else matters. Tell me, didn't she try to shake your confidence in me in some way?"

Morton remained silent, and Philippa understood.

"She told you that story about my—" a tear crept into her blue, child-like eyes—"my poor mother's pin. She told me she knew Valdeck had given it to me. The very idea! And

I don't know—I hate to say so, but she must have stolen it from me, because I missed it that night, after she first saw it. It's gone, and I did prize it so!"

Morton was evidently aghast. "But why on earth," he exclaimed, "should she do such a thing?"

"It's a very delicate subject—" she blushed deeply—"but I have heard—I mustn't tell you just where, but on good authority, for it was pretty well known in Paris—there was a love affair, and she is furiously jealous—even of me, since she has found that I am his friend. She interprets everyone's feelings for the man by her own sentiments, and she is bent on ruining him—and me, too, if she can, incidentally. She is circulating a lie, a wicked, cruel lie. She accuses him of robbery, and by inference she accuses me of helping him; I believe that's about what it amounts to. At any rate, she says I accepted presents of jewelry from him. She states that she recognized my poor mother's pin as part of the stolen property. It's outrageous!"

Morton set his lips hard and cut his horses sharply with the whip. "I don't remember this pin of yours, Philippa," he said, after a tense moment, more to say something than to voice any particular thought.

She colored quickly. "It's gone—I don't know how or where. I had it on yesterday; in fact, it was in the afternoon, at a tea, that she pretended to recognize it. I dined with some friends, but when I reached home it was gone!"

"Gone!" exclaimed Morton.

"Yes, gone, and where, unless Victoria stole it for some purpose, I don't know."

Morton shrank as if he had been burned. "Don't say that," he begged, huskily. "Don't make this wretched thing any more than it is."

"You couldn't," Philippa murmured, darkly. "I never would have believed it of her—never. But some awful change has come over her since she has been away. She is not the same."

Morton nodded, and drove on in silence. Rapidly he pieced out the two conversations, one by the other. Philippa was the unquestioned soul of honor, consequently it was her story Victoria's confidences completed, not Victoria's substantiated by Philippa's comments. He was inexpressibly saddened. Even the radiant presence of his lady love failed to rouse him from the mournful apathy into which he fell. He was still too loyal to the old affection to talk over the miserable downfall, even with Philippa. But something, and that his very darling illusion, had vanished from his life, and he faced, sadly enough, what he believed to be a loathsome reality.

The drive was completed in silence on his part, with chattering small-talk on hers. She had winged her shaft and sent it home, and watched its venom spread and poison with a light-hearted satisfaction worthy of a Lucretia Borgia of psychology. She had nothing now to fear from Victoria, and she was at the same time vindicating and serving Valdeck, in whom she confided with something of the blind faith that Morton reposed in her. Properly circulated, in ten days the story of Victoria's past would effectually sift among her friends and acquaintances, and cut her off silently and surely from all social life. The wicked slander against Valdeck would fall of itself, once the spring of vindictiveness was exposed to the public gaze, and Lucius, noble, generous, patriotic martyr, would pass over the net that was set for his feet, and his tormentor be herself involved in the meshes!

V

TEN days passed eventless to Victoria. But the morning of the eleventh was marked by a long letter from Sonia. In this her friend wrote affectionately of everything and of everyone in their old circle, and concluded with a request for information concerning the Auray robbery, she having been notified to hold herself in readiness to identify the crimi-

nal if caught. The postscript to this epistle contained an item of information that set Victoria thinking.

"The strange thing is," wrote Sonia, "that our inky countess has disappeared—so the official, a very chatty and sociable individual, informed me. She suspected the maid—you remember her—of being in collusion with the thief. Unfortunately, this did not dawn on her until the said Abigail had departed for parts unknown, which she did shortly after the burial of the child. The police have been searching for them both, and are inclined to think that the tragedy unsettled the poor lady's reason. However, she went supplied with a replica photograph of Valdeck from the rogues' gallery here, and plenty of money. She took no one into her confidence, so far as my informant knows. Strange, isn't it? I can just imagine that gaunt, black, half-crazed woman traveling aimlessly over the world in search of the man who killed her daughter and the woman who aided him. A sensational story from first to last! And now it seems from your far-off land a new chapter is to be sent out. I must own I'm interested. Be sure to write me all the news, and don't be surprised if at any moment the steamer lands on the shores of freedom your old friend and companion, Sonia Palintzka."

Victoria re-read the letter, stuck it on her file, and leaned back, running her hands through her heavy hair. So the maid had at last been suspected! She remembered with vivid clearness the scene in the dying child's presence, when the woman hysterically gave in evidence a description exactly contrary to that of the pretended Englishman. She recalled in particular the maid's description of the hand on her shoulder: "Hairy, rough and callous, like that of a workingman." Valdeck's hands were long, slim and gentlemanly. At the time she had put this discrepancy down to fright, to the possibility of a second marauder. It now appeared to her as a wilful desire to

mislead, to throw the pursuers off the scent. Jumping to her feet, Victoria began the regular pacing of the room that with her betokened her perturbation of spirit. After all, the black countess's quest might be in the right direction. Suddenly she stopped short.

"I'm sure of it! I'm sure of it!" she exclaimed aloud to the empty room. "That woman chloroformed herself when she heard the noise outside in the hall. I remember the cloth over the gag was loosely tied and very damp. The gag was a mere blind that doubtless Valdeck put on, the more readily to exonerate her. 'I'm sure of it! I have a feeling it is so.' Then she mused, more quietly: 'How this thing has been resurrected! Its influence is stretching over my life again, and I thought I had left it far behind in little, old-world Brittany. Here it comes up in modern, commonplace New York. So the maid was in it with him! I wonder I didn't think of it before. If ever the black countess does catch up with them——!'"

The rattle of a latch-key interrupted her, and a moment later Mrs. Durham entered, shut the door behind her, and stood regarding her friend with a face at once serious and questioning.

"Look here," Victoria began, "I've just had a letter——"

Mrs. Durham threw herself into her pet leather chair and raised her veil. The movement was instinct with gravity. Victoria stopped short in the sentence and looked curiously at her.

"What is it?" she demanded. "Has Delmonico's burned up? Or have the hansom cabbies gone out on strike?"

"You won't laugh when I tell you," Mrs. Durham exclaimed. "I'm sure I don't know how to tell you, or where to begin—but begin I must. Victoria, I have heard the most awful stories that are being circulated about you!"

"About me?" Victoria shrugged her shoulders. "People must talk

about someone. I haven't been home long, so naturally they take it out on me—I'm new. What do they say?—that I drink absinthe by the quart, or dance the latest Parisian '*danse excentrique*' on the studio roof? I'm prepared for anything."

"Indeed, you are not. Heavens! do you suppose I'd care for any such trifle as that? A slander of that sort is only a bored and unoccupied society's way of paying a compliment, and I tell you—well, I might as well blurt it out. They are saying you were mixed up in an abominably disgraceful love affair in Paris!"

Victoria sprang to her feet and stood bristling and defiant. "Who says such a thing?" she demanded.

"And," continued Mrs. Durham, hotly, ignoring the question, "I am told that out of revenge and jealousy you have endeavored to ruin the man's character by bringing terrible and unfounded accusations against him!"

"You're crazy!" Victoria interposed.

"Nothing of the sort."

"Nobody would circulate such nonsense."

"Well, some persons have."

"Who are they?"

"Three people to-day."

"Do they mention anyone, or is this all in the air?"

"No, they give names."

"Who?"

"Whom do you suppose?—Valdeck!"

"Valdeck?"

"Valdeck."

"There's only one person who would——"

"Of course——"

"Philippa!"

"Naturally."

"What does it all mean?"

"It's beyond me!"

"I recognized your friend's fine Italian hand at once, but you can't prove it easily. Suppose she denies saying anything?"

"But why should she do this?" exclaimed Victoria, utterly at sea.

"She is infatuated with him."

"What of it? That's no reason for saying I ever knew him in Paris."

Mrs. Durham settled herself and compressed her lips. "Don't you see? She wants to nullify your story if it should get out. Well, I gave the ladies, who thought I ought to know, a piece of my unvarnished mind for crediting such a thing—or listening to it, for that matter—but not till I had pumped them sufficiently to trace the information in the direction of your charming friend. Now, Victoria dear, we must hunt this thing down; bring everyone face to face with his neighbor who handed on the gossip. And when we have sifted everything down, we will take action."

"But," cried Victoria, bewildered for once, "I don't see any reason—there's no motive. People don't murder without a motive; why, then, should they kill a person's character without one?"

"I don't know," Mrs. Durham replied. "But I tell you, my dear, we will find out."

Victoria seized the poker and played havoc with the fire for a few moments, then she rose from her crouching position with a spring.

"I'm going to interview Philippa this very afternoon. Will you come with me?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Durham. "You must head this gossip off at once. You have only your unsupported word at present, but proof can be readily forthcoming, and Philippa will have to give the source of her information. If you must have a slander suit, you can get healthy damages."

"What I want," Victoria broke in, viciously, "is the privilege of branding the person who started that rumor with the red-hottest iron in the city. Damages won't give me any such physical satisfaction!"

"You're too primeval, my dear," her friend commented. "But I must confess that perhaps the whipping-post—However, first catch your scoundrel before you prepare the boiling oil."

Victoria smiled, gloatingly. Sud-

denly she darkened. "Do you know, I believe that Philippa has been persuading— But no, he would not believe such things of me, even if we have diverged."

"Who?"

"Morton. He hasn't been near me for over a week."

"Well, Philippa knows him, doesn't she?"

"Yes. But he wouldn't believe such stuff if he heard it. And even if he did, it would make no difference, so far as he is concerned. He would say I had a right to do as I pleased."

"Oh, with a woman in the case you can't tell," Mrs. Durham wisely suggested. "How well does he know Miss Ford?"

"I'm sure I don't know—I've been away so long. But—" and memory brought up a sudden picture of his face—"he was rather put out when I dissected her character for his benefit the last time I saw him. However, we'll clear it up. Put on your things and come."

She snatched her hat airily and harpooned it with a hatpin, while Mrs. Durham proceeded to a more careful and leisurely toilette.

"I'm glad we're going to have it out while I'm still hot and have it all fresh in my mind," Mrs. Durham remarked, as they emerged through the swinging doors of the building into the raw air of the outside world. But Victoria spoke not at all during their hasty journey to the old Verplanck mansion.

As they turned the corner they caught a glimpse of Morton just disappearing between the storm doors. Victoria was somewhat taken aback, but Mrs. Durham laughed.

"All the better; before two witnesses. Now for it."

They alighted, paid the cabby and mounted the steps slowly. Victoria's heart beat hard, for she heartily hated a scene, while her friend as heartily rejoiced as she saw a fresh incident for her new novel rapidly developing in real life. They were admitted by the butler, who held aside the green

curtains of the reception-room, into which they passed in single file.

Morton and Philippa rose from the divan somewhat hastily, and Philippa held out her hand with languid grace and a murmur of "so glad," which froze on her lips as Victoria deliberately thrust both hands in her muff, and Mrs. Durham's clear, light eyes gimleted into her hostess's violet orbs. She opened the battle without parley.

"Miss Ford, I have come with Miss Claudel, as a married woman and her close friend, to demand of you the meaning of certain lies I have heard coming unmistakably from you, which concern the private character of Miss Claudel."

Philippa's jaw dropped. In spite of her great control of her nerves she could not prevent an anxious glance in the direction of her lover. With a sudden flash she realized that she had overreached herself; that in her anxiety to help and shield Valdeck she had exposed her own precious person.

Victoria, having the most at stake, was the most nervous of all, and her pallor was misinterpreted by Philippa, who, to do her justice, had not the slightest doubt as to the truth of Valdeck's statement. She pulled herself together haughtily, ignoring Mrs. Durham's speech.

"I notice," she said, icily, "that Miss Claudel has very little to say for herself in this matter. Doubtless you have dragged her into the interview against her wishes. But as Miss Claudel has been one of my friends, for her sake I will let what you say pass."

Victoria recovered her power of speech. "What on earth are you saying, Philippa? I don't understand you. You seem to think I have something to hide!"

"Really!"

Victoria's face hardened. "We have come to ask you from whom you obtained this pretended information, as we have traced most of the current gossip to you."

Morton had held his breath for

some moments. This being in the presence of a three-cornered feminine conflict was too much for him, and might well have been for any man, however stout-hearted, particularly when one of the contestants happened to be a fiancée and another a life-long friend. His loyalty to Victoria flamed up with the hope that she might clear herself of the accusations brought against her. For an instant he almost hoped she would avenge the hurt. Then the loveliness of Philippa triumphed, and he felt only the sting of the insult offered her. Her voice came to him, cold and distinct:

"I have heard this story from more than one reliable source, but as the information was confidential, I am not at liberty to give names."

"Then," broke in Mrs. Durham, "Miss Claudel's suit for slander will be brought against you."

"Suit for slander!" Philippa murmured, aghast.

"Suit for slander!" Morton exclaimed, in anger.

"Suit for slander, Miss Ford," repeated Mrs. Durham, coolly. "What else do you expect? You could have foreseen that from the beginning. Such infamous lies are not put into circulation without——"

"Lies!" hotly interrupted Morton, to whom Philippa gladly ceded the floor. "Lies! Let me tell you—no; Philippa, permit me to handle this case for you; it is my right. Ladies, Miss Ford is engaged to me, and——"

He stopped short at sight of the blank sorrow and surprise on Victoria's face.

Forgetting all but her old affection for Morton, forgetting the object of her visit, forgetting Philippa's presence, she advanced to him with a sudden gesture as if to shield him from a blow.

"Oh, Morton! No, no! You can't mean it!"

The words were wrung from her by sudden emotion. There was no doubting her sincerity.

Mrs. Durham was silent with surprise; but Philippa was eloquent with mortally wounded pride.

"You dare speak so to my very face!" she cried, crimson with passion. "You—a notorious woman—yes, notorious! a woman who loses her character wilfully, and then attempts to blacken a man's reputation with the meanest, most despicable lies!" She choked with anger.

Mrs. Durham turned on her fiercely. "So you make this statement as a matter of personal knowledge, do you? Mr. Conway, you heard what Miss Ford has just said—not even referring to any informant, but making a statement pure and simple."

Philippa exploded again.

"And you—you! Leave this house at once!"

Morton restrained her.

"Philippa, dear, don't! You are losing your self-control. Mrs. Durham, I hardly think Miss Ford can continue this painful interview."

"I won't be quiet! I won't be silenced! I will speak out! How dare you!" she cried, to Victoria, for hysteria had its grip on her; "you, who haven't a shred of decency!"

Mrs. Durham turned white, and her voice had the edge of a frosted knife as it cut to the quick.

"So, Miss Ford, no shred of decency! And what do you say of a young woman who dines in a private room with a foreigner whom she scarcely knows, when it seems she is engaged to another man—dines in a private room in the most disreputable restaurant in the city! Yes, I mean you, Miss Ford!"

There was a moment of awful suspense. Philippa, taken completely off her guard, saw her world crumbling about her. Her face twitched pitifully for an instant, and her knees bent. She sank on the divan with a strange, broken awkwardness.

Victoria, no less astonished, looked at Mrs. Durham blankly. But that lady stood her ground with the calm relentlessness of an executioner.

Morton's voice was hoarse and trembling as he turned on her.

"You shall answer to me for this!"

"I shall be delighted," she replied. "My proofs, unlike Miss Ford's, will

be readily forthcoming. When would you like to see them?"

Philippa sprang to her feet.

"Morton, if you love me, don't give them the satisfaction of listening. You know it isn't true. Can't you see that they are trying to draw your attention from Victoria by making this attack on me?"

Mrs. Durham persisted, coldly: "Miss Ford, will you mention your informant in the matter of these accusations against Miss Claudel?"

Philippa was infuriated.

"I will not! I will not!" she insisted, and then, with a high scream of laughter, she burst into tears.

No one had heard the bell or the opening of the door, and not until Valdeck was actually ushered into the room did anyone realize the presence of an outsider.

He took in the situation, and paled.

"Excuse me—I—intrude."

He was about to withdraw, when Victoria barred his way.

"No," she cried; "you come most opportunely. You may clear up matters. Miss Ford, or someone else, has accused me of heaven knows what kind of a love affair in Paris—and with you! Do you dare to make such a statement?"

"I understand," Valdeck answered, after a moment's hesitation, "that you have made the statement that I was wanted for—heaven knows what crime in France. I have to thank you, I think, for an investigation of my effects recently made and the espionage of the police. The stories balance each other."

Victoria's jaw fell. "Do you mean——?"

"One story is as true as the other," he answered, lightly.

"What I said was true!" she broke in, hotly. "I will swear to it!"

He shrugged his shoulders. "Then you cannot expect me to deny. But I fear it will require more than your testimony, Miss Claudel——"

A sudden cessation of Philippa's tears and a quick exclamation from Morton broke in on them.

"She's dying!—quick, quick—

water—a doctor!" Then, turning savagely on Victoria and Mrs. Durham, Morton raged, "You've killed her—you've killed her!"

Mrs. Durham shrugged her shoulders. "Fainting is an easy way of getting out of an awkward situation," she observed, sententiously.

"I will go for a doctor," volunteered Valdeck.

"You stay and see it out!" Victoria commanded.

But Valdeck was already in the hall and hurrying down the steps to his hansom.

"Go!" commanded Morton, fiercely, "go! You have killed her!"

"John," said Mrs. Durham to the butler, as she passed out, "go fetch a maid to attend Miss Ford."

VI

THE next morning Philippa lay in her elaborate bed with the violet hangings, and ruminated. She was charming in a white silk *négligée*, her yellow hair softly framing the interesting pallor of her face and the not unbecoming lustre of her weary, sleep-hungry eyes. She was conscious of it, but was too miserable to feel satisfaction. For the first time in her life she admitted a doubt of her talent as a diplomat, and a dawn of real conditions vaguely lighted her mind. She realized that her self-conceit, her belief in her own social invulnerability had led her to a terrible *impasse*.

She twisted uncomfortably and drew the bedclothes round her as she contemplated the situation. She strove to collect her wits and think clearly, but memories of the previous day rose suddenly before her, visioned with insistent terror, and she flushed crimson with mortification and rage.

She was loath to admit it, but she had bungled—bungled fearfully. And worst of all, what must Valdeck think of her! She had talked too much for either his plans or hers. And she began to understand in what dangerous places she had spread her

fatal information. She had left her tracks uncovered. She moaned aloud and twisted anew, recalling a thousand insinuations she had let fall, a thousand confidences indiscreetly given. She had committed herself and must take the blame, or openly throw it on Valdeck, where it belonged. Here she buried her face in the pillow in agony. She could not do that; she must shield him.

The one spark of womanhood in her false and selfish nature was awake at last in his service. She loved him! She knew it now. Loved him! loved him!

She lay still for some moments buried in a blissful misery. Then she shivered convulsively. And what of her dinner with him at Gagano's? She had been seen—by whom? Mrs. Durham had the story straight enough. But Valdeck would deny it; she would deny it. Mrs. Denison would substantiate her story of dinner with her. But the husband—Philippa's conceit lifted its humbled head. He would have to be won over. Morton would never believe it. But heavens! how near she had been to betraying herself when the mine was sprung! She congratulated herself on her fainting fit—the first well-managed move of her disastrous campaign.

She glanced at the little silver clock on the table by her bedside, then sat up and rubbed her face, stiff from the night's visions and vigil.

Come what would, she thought, she must fulfil her duty to Valdeck. She had his secret in her keeping. More than that, concealed under the bed lay a despatch box that contained the trust moneys of the Polish Educational Society. A glow of returning self-respect passed over her as she thought of the confidence he reposed in her. Hers was the hand he had selected to help him in his hour of need. She recalled the momentous interview when he had begged her to keep his treasure for him, until such time as she should be able safely to transfer it, and the directions she had received for its disposal.

She was on the point of getting out

of bed to make sure that the box was still there, when she distinguished her aunt's step in the hall, and quickly sank back among her lace-frilled pillows.

Mrs. Ford did not give herself the trouble of knocking, but marched magnificently into the sanctuary of beauty. She was clad in a walking suit of a military cut and many brass buttons, and was even more than usual the drum-major. Her face suggested court-martial, however, and Philippa winced. The aunt stood for a moment by the bed, and regarded her niece with cold-blooded appraisal.

"You are a good-looking girl," she remarked at length, "and I have made considerable sacrifices of my comfort as a speculation on your chances. But it seems you are a fool—and so am I, for believing in you!"

Philippa rolled over and presented a view of her back.

"I am informed that there was a scene here yesterday, in which Miss Claudel, Mrs. Durham, Morton Conway and that Valdeck participated."

"You have been gossiping with the servants, I see," commented her listener.

Mrs. Ford flushed, but continued, icily:

"Never mind how I secured my information; I have secured it—that is the principal thing. But from what I heard yesterday in several houses I expected some trouble. There are many unpleasant stories afoot concerning Victoria Claudel, and everyone quotes you as authority."

Philippa groaned inwardly.

"I can guess who told you such an extraordinary thing, if the world cannot. And it strikes me that your intimacy with Valdeck must have reached a remarkable pass before he would confide to you his love affairs, real or invented. Now, if you give Valdeck as authority for this scandal, the world will say what I have said. If you do not quote Valdeck, you must answer for the story yourself. What will you do?"

There was silence in the abode of beauty.

"There is only one way for you to clear the board. Get Morton to marry you at once, quietly, and go abroad. You haven't sense enough to think of that for yourself, so I came to tell you. And another thing: If you want to save yourself, drop that scalawag Pole. Furthermore, if the worst happens, you needn't come to me—with a slander suit on your hands, your engagement broken off by Morton, and the open secret of your affection for a man whose popularity is entirely mushroom, and of whom nothing is known except a few letters of introduction carelessly given."

Mrs. Ford rose without relaxing the austere anger of her face, and sailed majestically from the room.

Philippa passed another half-hour in agonized contemplation of her life's chess-board. At the end of that time she rose, fagged and worn, and looked about her miserably. Her aunt was right. She must sacrifice Valdeck, marry Morton and go abroad. Her hand sank limply in her lap as she seated herself on the edge of her bed.

Sacrifice Valdeck! Never see him again—never again! For a moment she sat staring in the mirror before her, for the first time in her life blind to her own image.

Suddenly something deep within her seemed to break. She heard a sob, realized that it came from her own aching throat, and throwing herself on her bed again, she gave herself up to a passion of weeping—not tears such as she had shed before, but tears that seemed to swell and rise from the very depths of her heart and to find their way to her eyes in hopeless agony.

How long she lay crying she did not know, but at last, remembering that action would soon be required of her, she washed her red and swollen eyes, and proceeded to her toilette, which had somehow lost its usual charm. She dispensed with the services of the maid, preferring solitude and the difficulties of hooking her own collar. She selected the plainest tailor gown and

most sad-colored bodice—theatrical to the last. As the final hook was fastened and the last pin adjusted, a timid knock called her attention.

The maid entered with such an assumed look of unconcern that Philippa was unpleasantly conscious of the inevitable talk below stairs, occasioned by yesterday's storm. The woman presented the silver tray on which lay her mistress's morning letters. Philippa collected them quickly and nodded dismissal. She had hoped for a word from Valdeck. There was only a wedding-card, a note from the dressmaker and a plain envelope with a typewritten address, which she left to the last, thinking it an advertisement or a bill. Its contents, however, almost stopped her heart, and then set it going violently.

A few lines in the well-known handwriting:

MY BELOVED LADY, PHILIPPA: One last service I beg of you. Go to the *Germanic*, which sails to-morrow, Wednesday, at two. Give the box to a lady who will meet you there in stateroom No. 148. She will wear a tan ulster with blue velvet collar and hold a bunch of carnations. Address her, in French, as Madame Tollé. I am watched too carefully to venture putting in an appearance; but I trust you even as I would myself. God reward you, my beloved, my own, for your goodness to me and to a just and noble cause.

Obviously this had been written before the scene of the previous afternoon. She consulted the postmark and found that she was right.

"Two o'clock!" She glanced at her watch. "Half-past twelve already." Hastily pinning on her toque and selecting a blue chiffon veil that disguised while it enhanced her charm, she pulled out the despatch box from its place of concealment. It was very heavy. Wrapping it about in thick paper till it resembled a large package of books, she addressed it to Mme. Tollé, Room 148, SS. *Germanic*, in case anything should prevent her interview with the mysterious woman. Going down-stairs, she notified the butler that she would not be home to lunch.

Then she ate a cracker and drank a glass of sherry, for her emotions had consumed her strength. This done, she started on her journey.

At the door a qualm of fear caught her. Her aunt's words rang in her ears: "Drop that scallawag Pole if you want to save yourself!" But the warning passed unheeded. Her love, now watered by her tears, had grown in strength and luxuriance. She would serve him in this last request. She would save him and the cause he loved, even if she must put him out of her life forever, after this one last effort to play his providence.

She called a cab, into the depths of which she sank restfully. The jangle of harness and the rattle of wheels made a soothing music to her strained and quivering nerves.

When she reached the long wharf, and the horse's hoofs sounded hollow on the wooden floor, Philippa woke from her apathy, and telling the man to wait, made her way with her burden toward the sloping gangway of the first cabin.

On board she went directly to the saloon. A hasty exploration of the corridor near at hand showed her that, numerically, she was far from her destination. A fair-haired, stupid-eyed German cabin-boy, who hugged a trumpet and gazed vacantly on her, was at last persuaded to inform her that No. 148 would be on the other side and "oop-stairs."

Following his directions, Philippa at last found the cabin numbers dwindling—180, 176. She emerged from one of the side aisles and came face to face with Victoria Claudel. The shock was so great that she almost dropped the treasure-box. But Victoria, who was bidding an affectionate farewell to a girl friend, merely turned her back and proceeded with her conversation.

Philippa had to pass them to reach her number, and a dull fear crossed her heart as if she had neared something baneful. Again her aunt's words rang in her ears: "Drop that scallawag Pole if you want to save yourself!"

She was on the brink of a nervous collapse, but blind to her danger. An open door attracted her attention. Over it was the number, 148. The light from the porthole showed the simple yet luxurious cabin furnishings. On the sofa-bunk, with her back to the light, sat a tall woman, wearing a modish, forward-tilted hat and a tan ulster, and holding loosely in her lap a bunch of red carnations.

Philippa mustered her courage and assumed the manner of an old acquaintance.

"I have come to wish you a pleasant trip, Madame Tollé, and to bring you some books to lighten your journey." She spoke in French, with an affected ease, but in spite of herself her voice was thin, excited and broken.

The woman rose gracefully and greeted her.

"You are very good," she said, and she closed the cabin door sharply.

Philippa, with a sigh of relief, deposited her burden on the sofa, and stood awkwardly.

"So," the woman continued, placing herself in front of the door, with a strange tone of irony and bitterness, "so you are the creature who has taken his fancy now, are you? Let me ask you this, madame: Do you think I have risked my life and freedom for him that he may spend his love on such as you, *hein?* It is to the death between us, I warn you! Not yet, for we are not in a position, but later—later!"

"Let me pass!" Philippa demanded, hysterically, frightened out of her self-control. "I have done my duty—let me go! I don't know you, and I don't understand."

The Frenchwoman laughed, jeeringly.

"Oh, no! How should you understand?"

A sound of voices in the corridor made her lower her tone. "Oh, no! But wait, wait till we are out of the woods; then come to France, if you dare, and see what the end will be!"

Philippa's nerves were giving way. She felt ill and dizzy, but her glance

fell on the call-bell, and her face lighted up.

"I shall ring!" she said, with all the dignity she could muster.

Madame Tollé caught her hand just as the door she had defended swung open. In the narrow passage stood two men, their eyes fastened on the occupants of No. 148, and Philippa, seeing relief in their presence, sprang forward.

Her antagonist turned quickly and caught sight of the faces before her. The change that came over her was terrible. She seemed to shrink as in the fire of a furnace. She backed away slowly, till her foot caught on the protruding corner of her bag. She stumbled against the washstand and clung to it for support.

Philippa, having no key to the situation, looked in astonishment not unmixed with relief. She hurried across the raised threshold, trembling and pale.

"That woman is mad!" she said, brokenly.

One of the men stepped to her side and caught her with a detaining hand.

"You cannot go, madame—pardon me. You had better say nothing," he added, in a lower tone. "Anything you might say would be used against you."

"What do you mean?" Philippa demanded, fiercely.

But there was no leisure for questions or answers.

A smothered exclamation sounded from within, a quick rush, and through the open door they saw the other man close with the tall figure of the woman. Her hand was slowly forced above her head. In it she held a small revolver. The fingers clenched, there was a sharp report, a whiff of smoke, a hole in the cabin ceiling.

Philippa moved as if to run out. The grip on her arm tightened.

Down the main corridor a confusion of hastening feet and frightened voices announced the panic caused by the shot. She saw the steel handcuffs slip over the helpless hands of

Madame Tollé. A third man darted by them and quickly gathered up the scattered baggage, the despatch box and two hand-bags. In another instant they were surrounded by anxious, inquiring faces. She was being conducted to the main corridor; presently they would be in the saloon.

Philippa staggered and gasped.

"Brace up!" said her captor, not unkindly. "I'll take you through as if you had nothing to do with it. You're not an old hand." He looked at her admiringly. "Bad company, my girl, bad company!"

Her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth. There in the crowd stood Victoria, looking at her. She tried to raise her head and walk haughtily by, but she could not. Her eyes would fix themselves on the face of her former friend. She saw an expression of the utmost amazement cross Victoria's face, saw those fine, fearless gray eyes travel back to her with sudden comprehension.

Victoria slipped from her place with a matter-of-fact air and quietly joined her.

"Permit me to accompany this lady," she said, leaning across and addressing the detective in a low voice. "There is some mistake."

He looked at her intently, and nodded.

"Everyone is leaving the ship," she continued, gently, in Philippa's ear. "Lower your veil, walk easily, and nobody will guess; talk to me, seem interested."

Philippa turned her tortured eyes to Victoria, but her paralyzed tongue could form no sound.

They reached the gangplank and the dock, conscious that the attention of the crowd was centred on the figures that followed them. There was a confused murmur of voices and exclamations.

"Turn round and look as if you, too, were interested," commanded Victoria, and the helpless Philippa obeyed.

"This way," directed their conductor, indicating a waiting cab. "We have two, for we expected to

land the gentleman himself—not this lady, though. The whole affair is a pretty rum go.”

“I’m coming with you,” Victoria observed, determinedly. “This lady can prove her innocence, I am sure, and she should be protected.”

Without waiting for consent or refusal she entered the cab and assisted Philippa, who was spent and trembling.

The detective let down the little seat in front of them, slammed the door, and the cab lurched forward toward the police station.

For some time Philippa, utterly dazed, lay back among the cushions, gazing vacantly into the face of her captor, who sat opposite, a square-headed man, with beady eyes and a thin, determined mouth, while Victoria sat and wondered ruefully at her own quixoticism. She had no cause to love Philippa, but she had obeyed the impulse of class. She had seen one of her own world suddenly caught in this equivocal net, and had turned to help, forgetting for the moment her wrongs at the hands of this woman.

Abruptly Philippa straightened herself, and as if her stolen voice had suddenly been returned to her, burst out: “What do you mean? How dare you arrest me? What have I done? It’s wicked—it’s cruel! Tell me, this instant!”

“Now, lady,” the detective said, soothingly, “don’t you get riled; just you be quiet. You’re not used to this sort of thing, I know, and I tell you the best thing to do is to say nothing at all.”

“But what for—what for? It’s some horrid plot—it’s your doing!” she cried, suddenly opening fire on Victoria. “It’s you—you informed on him—you did! And now he’ll be sent to Russia, or Siberia. And all because he wanted to help a poor, down-trodden people.”

“I don’t know what you are talking about!” said Victoria, angrily. “I saw you in distress, and I came to shield you from the crowd. As to informing, I told you the whole story,

and that I had gone to the French consul. I suppose this had something to do with Valdeck,” she added, addressing the detective.

“Yes, mum,” he nodded, “and from what I heard you say I take you to be the lady who gave the clue. Did you recognize the woman—the other woman?”

Victoria shook her head. “I didn’t see her,” she answered. “Who is she?”

He looked at her sagely. “Big game,” he said, “and came mighty near giving us the slip. The next thing is to make her tell where the gent is. Here we are, ladies—not far to go. Now, my girl, you be careful how you talk. I know you—you all get hysterical the first time you’re caught, but just you hang onto yourself.”

The cab stopped short, and the door was opened by a police sergeant, who stood aside as the trio descended from the vehicle in the stone-paved court surrounded by official-looking buildings. The hack turned and departed, making room for the second cab, from which Madame Tollé and her two companions emerged.

The whole party filed into the large, bare waiting-room, lighted by a gray-white shine of daylight filtered through pebbled glass. An immense desk similar to those used in hotels filled one side of the place; behind this a police captain stood twirling his mustache.

The detectives advanced to the captain, and a low-voiced conversation ensued, in which the words “small book” and “French consul” were repeated at intervals.

Philippa shivered as with cold, and leaned against the desk, helplessly. Victoria bent toward her, touched by her misery. “Ask for a lawyer,” she suggested, softly. “You have a right to that, I know.”

“Here, you,” interrupted the captain, “no whispering with the prisoner! Say, Pollock, who’s that?”

“Miss Claudel, who gave the information to the consul, so she said. It seems she knows the other lady who brought the box.”

"H'm!" said the captain. "I suppose we had better do a bit of telephoning here. Mulligan, ring up the consulate."

"I want a lawyer," begged Philippa, timidly.

"Do, eh? Well, I suppose you can have one. Who?"

She hesitated a moment, vainly trying to collect her scattered senses. "Mr. Pendle, 120A Broadway—Pendle & Brown. They are my aunt's attorneys."

"Your name?" demanded the officer.

"Philippa Clensdale Ford, of 841½ Madison avenue."

"Very well. Now we will see what we have here."

The two handbags and the iron despatch box were laid on the table, and after a few attempts the lock of the latter was forced and the lid thrown back, revealing a layer of white cotton.

"Inventory," ordered the captain.

The sergeant prepared to note the contents. There was a moment's tense silence as the concealing batting was removed, revealing a number of tiny packages wrapped in tissue paper. The clumsy, hairy fingers of the officer unfolded one picked up at random. There was a glitter, a sparkle and a flash as the contents lay bare to the light—ten or more diamonds of various sizes.

A gasp from Philippa was the only sound that greeted the find.

"First package, twelve diamonds; second package, six small emeralds; third, two large diamonds; fourth, handful of small stones; fifth, four rubies, one cat's-eye; sixth, eight-strand pearl and diamond collar; seventh, pearl rope, very large; eighth, large yellow diamond; two packets colored pearls, three pink, two brown, one large black, pierced."

There was absolute quiet as the heaps increased, sparkling as they lay on their open wrappers of tissue paper.

Philippa, her eyes dilated, breathed hard in terror as the jewels accumulated. She was staggered by the

shock of surprise. All this had been left in her charge; she had slept in her violet-hung bed above all this wealth, believing it but a few paltry hundreds to be turned over to a deserving charity. What did it all mean? Could it be that Valdeck—? But no! impossible! These were doubtless the gifts of wealthy sympathizers.

The merciless counting went on. Would they never come to an end? At last an exclamation from the imperturbable sergeant voiced the feelings of all, as he rolled in his palm a huge brown diamond and two solitaires of great size and brilliancy. "So help me, Mulligan!" he exclaimed, "if this ain't the swag of them New Orleans robberies that we had word of last month! This here brown shiner is the 'Longosini' one. Where's that reward list? On the board yonder——"

Mulligan went to the large blackboard at the further end of the room, whereon were pasted announcements of rewards for the capture of criminals. "Yes, sir," he answered from across the room; "it's themselves! 'Brown diamond, five carats; two white and one blue, three and a half, three and four carats, respectively.' Say, Pollock, you've made the haul this time, and no mistake!"

"Here's the blue one," broke in the captain, as he held up a jewel between his thumb and forefinger. "Well, of all the surprises! No bail for this, I guess—no, sir!"

"But," cried Victoria, "you can't keep Miss Ford here. Put her under surveillance, if you must—but no, you can't! Philippa, Commissioner Holes is one of your aunt's friends—have him called up; he can do more for you here than anyone else."

"Oh, yes," exclaimed Philippa, "you must let me go! Yes, telephone to Commissioner Holes; tell him to come himself and release me. Oh, I don't know what I shall do!"

"Whew!" whistled the sergeant, softly; "Commissioner Holes, is it? Well, well, now! But, Miss Ford, how did you come by these beauties?"

Maybe ye can give us a satisfactory explanation."

"I can—oh, I can!" Philippa asserted, pale with excitement. "Mr. Valdeck told me he was the head of the Polish Educational Society and was collecting funds for the cause. He said he was watched by Russian spies, and couldn't send the money on without being suspected and having everything seized and confiscated when it reached the other side—and, of course, I believed it all; indeed I did!"

"Look at that now," Mulligan remarked. "Russian spies, is it? Sure, lady, it's the likes of you that makes the life easy for scamps and rogues. And what is the grand American police force for? Sure, we haven't no use for nary a foreign spy."

"Shut up!" commanded the captain. "Miss Ford, have you anything to prove your statement?"

Philippa dragged at the bosom of her dress; tremblingly she undid the buttons and drew forth two crumpled notes. "There, there!" she cried; "read them. See what he says himself!"

The captain smoothed the rumpled sheets and read aloud.

There was a pause, and then Philippa wished she had died before she had given up the letters. As the words of endearment, spoken in the harsh, mechanical voice of the captain, filled the police station, a burning, writhing shame overpowered her. She had forgotten, in her anxiety to clear herself, the terms of the letters. She clung to the desk, feeling Victoria's honest gray eyes on her burning with indignation. Oh, that Victoria, of all people, should see her in this state!

As the last sentence echoed into silence, Madame Tollé, who up to this moment had stood silent, uttered a sharp cry, like a hurt animal. Then she burst into a torrent of French abuse that made the walls of the station house shiver, used as they were to ungentle language.

But Philippa was unconscious of this. All she realized was Victoria—

Victoria, who turned and faced her with clenched hands and white face. She was speaking slowly and with terrible scorn: "And you were engaged to Morton—you! I thought there might have been some mistake about that private-room dinner party; I thought you might explain, but we hardly need go further!" She broke off and turned her back; without another word she moved toward the door.

"Hold on, Miss Claudel! We want you, please. The consul will be here presently, and then we'll need your services. Mulligan, search the bags, and then take the Frenchwoman to the matron and have her searched. But first come here."

Madame Tollé was led forward. "Your name?" asked the captain. There was no answer. The detective spoke: "She is Marie Françoise Ducas," he said. "Here is her photograph." He laid it on the desk.

"Nativity?"

"Paris," answered the detective, as the woman maintained her stubborn silence, now and again darting venomous glances at Philippa through her heavy veil.

"Occupation?"

"She is a pal of Valdeck's, alias Kelsoff, alias O'Farrell."

"Lift that veil!" commanded the officer.

The blue tissue was raised, revealing a sharp, not unhandsome face, on which the traces of a delicate make-up were apparent, contrasting with her present pallor.

Victoria started, looked, and looked again. "Why," she cried, "I know her. That is the maid—Madame Château-Lamion's maid."

The woman turned on her an instant's searching glance; then, in spite of herself, recognition dawned in her face. "*Connais-pas*," she said, shortly, with a shrug of her shoulders.

"You could swear to this?" the captain asked slowly of Victoria, who answered, without hesitation:

"Yes, I will swear to it. I recall her perfectly."

"That's the consul's racket," Mul-

ligan suggested. "We're in for this New Orleans business. Glory be to the saints, but she's a thorough one!" And he looked admiringly at the Frenchwoman.

Meanwhile communications were pouring in by telephone. The consul was out, but would be notified as soon as possible; Mr. Pendle would come at once; Mrs. Ford was absent.

"Gentlemen," said Victoria, "if you have no further need of me, I will go."

"Your name, first, please, in full, and your residence; for sure you'll be wanted as a witness and to identify the lady's maid again. Then you can go, and many thanks for your trouble."

Victoria gave her name and address without casting a glance toward Philippa, too outraged to show any sympathy. The sergeant accompanied her to the door, but as it closed she heard the order:

"Take 'em to the matron."

VII

THE morning of the same day that witnessed the incarceration of Philippa, Morton rose after a sleepless and tormented night and made his resolve; this matter must be cleared up. When his fiancée had been removed to her room and the flurried maid had brought him the message that "mademoiselle was recovering, but begged to be excused," he had betaken himself to his room in a high state of excitement. Above all else he was enraged at Mrs. Durham, the woman who had dared to fling such cowardly accusations at the most saintly girl on earth. As he paced the floor he formed his determinations. Philippa the pure, the innocent, must not be drawn into this wretched business. He would conduct it for her; it was his place and privilege, and he would see who should write retractions and apologies, Philippa or Mrs. Durham. In fancy he hounded the malicious authoress to her lair, delivered an oration on

feminine weakness, folly and venom, and departed only to place in the hands of his wronged angel the document wrung from her accuser.

But Victoria—alas, Victoria! His old friendship and loyalty pleaded for her. How could he have been so mistaken? To do him justice, had he not been love-mad he never would have owned a doubt of her. But so is man constituted that one touch of passion weakens his hold on his perceptions, even his certain knowledge. He would have fought to the last ditch for her against all odds, save yellow-haired Philippa with the violet eyes. But fate had placed before him just that one antagonist, and his friendship failed—not without pain, not without hurt to his whole nature. But he could not doubt his love.

Valdeck and his equivocal words rose before him—Valdeck, the criminal! But perhaps after all that charge was groundless; Philippa had declared that Victoria had a malicious vengeance to satisfy in her statement of the case.

At last, however, Morton's instincts refused to be suppressed longer. Whatever Valdeck's relations to Victoria might be, Morton was forced to confess that he believed her story; the man was undoubtedly the social vampire she pictured. Had he not felt it from the first, and begged his darling to shun the contaminating companionship? It was only Philippa's innocence and lack of knowledge of things worldly that had led her to tolerate the impostor. Then why believe the villain's testimony against Victoria? Morton's saner self demanded. Perhaps, after all, the blame lay with Valdeck alone. Philippa had undoubtedly lent too ready an ear to the man's accusations, brought solely to throw discredit on Victoria's hitherto unimpeached word—women were notoriously uncharitable toward one another. His intuition told him he was near the truth now; he felt that at last he was on the right track. He might even clear Victoria's skirts from blame, with no graver charge against Philippa than a

too great willingness to listen and believe evil of her neighbors. Again and again he went over the ground, gaining greater faith in his surmises. He forgot his dinner, smoked himself into a thoroughly nervous condition, and passed a night of wakefulness and speculation.

With the morning came action. First he must see Mrs. Durham, and secure a written retraction of her accusation against Philippa; then he would sift the matter down to the last grain of fact, exonerate Victoria, and bring Valdeck to his much-needed punishment.

As early as he decently could Morton telephoned to Mrs. Durham, and was promptly answered.

His anger flamed up once more as he sat in the stuffy booth and heard over the connecting wire the well-modulated tones of her voice.

"This is Mr. Conway," he answered her first question. "Can you make it convenient to see me this morning?" His tone was cold and boded no mercy.

To his surprise the answer came fearlessly, and it was even more beligerent and icy than his own. "Certainly; I was expecting you. If you will come for me at once, you will find me at breakfast in the restaurant. We can go into the matter at once."

Her readiness staggered him; he had expected equivocation and delay; this businesslike alertness was unsettling.

"In half an hour, then?" he inquired, with a new note of anxiety in his voice.

"The sooner the better," came the unwavering reply; and he hung up the receiver with a horrible sensation of dread.

How could she be so sure of herself? How dared she face him with her trumped-up story? Surely there must be some appearance, some foundation—perfectly innocent, but making misinterpretation possible.

No! He recalled vividly Philippa's upturned, beseeching eyes and her tearful, childish accent as she had turned to him. "Morton, if you love

me, don't give them the satisfaction of listening. You know it isn't true!"

Of course, he knew it wasn't true, poor, bewildered little girl! Feeling again all his eager animosity, he went out and called a passing hansom.

As he drove up Fifth avenue he hardened his heart and steeled his nerves. This clashing of feminine weapons and armor was new and harassing. How was one to tell a lady, young, pretty and bewitchingly gowned, just what a mean, wretched example of humanity she really was! Morton would vastly have preferred a dozen tigers, or as many famished duns. But he buckled on his mail of insensibility and justice, and relentlessly proceeded.

As he drew up before the vast, yellow side of the studio building he collected himself and assumed a formally polite manner calculated to strike terror into any less businesslike and well-administered citadel than Mrs. Durham's heart.

As he entered the restaurant the lady rose to meet him, brisk, frank and energetic.

"Good morning, Mr. Conway. Of course you've been vastly annoyed. I quite understand. And the sooner it's over the better. Isn't that so?"

He noted with annoyance that she seemed even fresher, younger, more self-possessed and more beautifully tailored than ever.

"You understand the nature of my visit, then?" he inquired, coldly.

"Oh, dear, yes. You want me to explain what I meant—dare I produce my informant, and all the rest of it! My dear man, I would not have made that assertion had I not been perfectly prepared to do so. You have a cab? Good! It will save time, and I must be back by twelve—my typewriter, you know." She smiled sweetly and preceded him to the hall, out of the swinging doors and into the street.

He assisted her into the hansom and took his seat. "Where to?" he asked, his curiosity piercing his indifferent manner.

"To your Uncle Morris Courney's office."

Morton gave the address in bewilderment.

"I'll tell you a few things about this, if you like," said Mrs. Durham, leaning back quite at her ease and not in the least flustered. "Your good old relative was a great friend of Victoria's parents, you see, and some of this nasty gossip concerning the daughter reached his ears. Of course he made up his mind to discover who had originated the said slander. He came to me—we were old pals, too, as it happened, and he likewise knew me to be a great admirer and an unswerving friend of Victoria." There was the least suspicion of emphasis marking the "unswerving," and Morton winced ever so slightly.

"He asked me to whom Victoria was indebted for these fascinating little innuendoes and open remarks, and I told him just what everyone else has, namely, that Victoria's dear friend, Miss Ford, was at the bottom of it all. 'What!' exclaimed old Morris, 'Philippa Ford? Why, she wouldn't dare! I saw her myself go upstairs with that Valdeck in Gagano's restaurant, where no decent woman ever goes. She couldn't afford to speak ill of anyone!' 'Well,' I answered, 'she has.' 'Then,' said your Uncle Morris, 'I'll be hanged if I don't prove her a person unfit to be believed.'"

Morton swung round in his seat as if he had been hit, and faced his companion, white to the lips.

"Kindly remember I am engaged to Miss Ford," he said slowly, dizzied with indignation.

Mrs. Durham sighed. "I'm trying to prepare you for what you are bound to get from Courney, who has, I have learned, a very just perception of things and a wonderfully fine vocabulary with which to clothe it. To continue, I begged him to do nothing till I saw him again. I wanted to think things over and make the most of the information when the time came. That was yesterday

morning, and the time came in the afternoon."

"Mr. Courney is mistaken; a fancied resemblance," Morton answered, doggedly.

"Not at all; but I will let him speak for himself. In the meantime, I am honestly sorry for you, though I've no patience with anyone claiming even ordinary common sense who pins his faith on a woman of Miss Ford's stamp when he has the friendship of such a personality as Victoria. You deserve—well, I don't know that my imagination can picture anything quite bad enough. She's worth ten dozen such as you! And all the golden-haired Philippas that ever were born wouldn't make a showing that Vic couldn't overturn with her little finger. Ouf! I'm getting angry. Let's be quiet."

"I think it would be in better taste," Morton murmured, under his breath.

Mrs. Durham leaned back, watching the endless procession of city blocks and the ceaseless hurrying procession that crowded the sidewalk and congested the thoroughfares.

They at last drew up before the towering front of a huge office hive, where anxious business men, busy as bees, rushed in and out. As if in a dream they were caught in the rush and snapped into one of the elevators. Instantly they shot upward, stopping with disturbing jerks at various landings. At the ninth floor they stepped out and walked down the marble corridor. Before the office sign of "Courney & Hall" they paused. Mechanically Morton opened the door, and his commanding companion swept by him. With a regal nod to the clerk who advanced to meet them, she handed her card with a request for instant admittance to the senior partner's private office. The sound of her voice was apparently an open sesame, for the ground-glass door at the upper end of the room was opened abruptly by a red-faced little man, who rushed down on her after the manner of an affectionate bulldog whose exuber-

ant greeting might well be mistaken, by the uninitiated, for a threatening advance.

"So it's you, is it? Come in, come in, come in!"

He fired the words with inconceivable rapidity, as he wrung first Mrs. Durham's hand and then his nephew's somewhat reluctant palm.

They filed into the sanctum, and the little millionaire banged the door smartly.

"Sit down, sit down, sit down!" he volleyed. "Don't mind me if I tramp about—nervous, you know, nervous! I suppose you brought Morton down to hear what I have to say. Glad of it, glad of it." He paused, and fixed his piercing black eyes on Morton.

Mrs. Durham had seated herself calmly. But Morton remained erect, towering above his rapid-firing uncle by a full head and a half.

"You're not engaged to her, are you?" Courncy demanded, suddenly suspicious. "I heard rumors, you know—rumors. But I denied them, of course. Still, before we go any further, are you here as Victoria's friend to run down that cowardly lie, or are you trying to clear that sniveling little cat, Philippa Ford?"

"Uncle Morris," he answered, simply, "I am engaged to Miss Ford, but—" and the faintest hesitation trembled in his words—"I want to know the truth. Mrs. Durham has accused the young lady of dining in a notorious restaurant with a—well, in questionable company, while she was professing her love for me and had been engaged only a few days. And Miss Ford positively denies this."

"But she did—she did!" cried the little man.

Morton raised his hand deprecatingly. "That has to be proved. As for these stories, I am only too anxious to clear Victoria—you know how fond I am, and always have been, of her. I am convinced that this man Valdeck has put these lies into circulation to shield himself. Perhaps Miss Ford may have repeated them, for which I should be heartily sorry;

but if so, it was in the belief that she was speaking the truth."

Mr. Courncy fairly danced in his desire to break this torrent of speech and get in his own crowding words. "Fiddlesticks! bosh!" he roared, finally. "Miserable little minx, glad enough she was to blacken a girl like Victoria Claudel! I have learned—and it hasn't been from Mrs. Durham, either—" he turned as he spoke, indicating with a quick gesture the chair near the door. It was empty!

The two men looked startled for a moment, then relieved. With rare tact the lady had removed her restraining presence.

Courncy bubbled with appreciation. "And now, thank God, I can swear all I please. As I said, I have heard from many sources that the Ford girl has been doing her level best to ruin Victoria's reputation! Now, answer me. Didn't she shake even your confidence?"

Morton flushed to the roots of his hair, and his uncle, requiring no further answer, chuckled angrily:

"Of course she did, confound her! And let me tell you I saw her—saw her myself—going into Gaganos's. I was sitting in the restaurant facing the door that opens into the hall leading to the private rooms up-stairs. They came in about half-past seven. I can describe every rag she wore: a black velvet dress and a sable cape and a black hat with feathers on it. She glanced into the room. I could see the annoyance on her face when she discovered that the door was open, but somehow she didn't recognize me. With her was that man Valdeck, and I'll bet my last share in the 'Consolidated' he's a bad egg, in spite of the fuss these women make over him. Who in thunder is he? and where did he come from? Confound him!"

"I must believe you mistaken," Morton objected, but the old resolution was gone from his manner.

"Mistaken! mistaken! Damme, sir, I'm not mistaken! Unless she takes back every word she has said about the daughter of my old friend—a girl who hasn't a father of her own

to help her—if she doesn't, I say, I'll have every newspaper in town take this up! I'll make what I saw public! Fanshaw was with me, and saw her, too, and can corroborate it! I guess the three of us can prove what we say, and I'll bet Miss Philippa won't be able to prove an alibi!"

"Three?" was all Morton could say, for his tongue thickened and his eyes were dim.

"The waiter, you blockhead, the waiter!" roared Courney. "After Mrs. Durham exploded her bomb she went down and interviewed him. Very clever woman that, very clever! Ought to have been a man, a business man. Clear head, clear eye; no fluster, no brag. Anyway, she argued that one or the other of them would see the danger and shut the waiter up. So she went first. Good move, very. But, unfortunately, the fellow wouldn't say much."

The young man drew himself up to his full height, scorn and agony at work on his handsome face.

"Pretty game, isn't it, trying to bribe servants? And, pray, what could a waiter of Gagano's know of Miss Ford? I should count his identification mere perjury!"

"Not a bit of it! not a bit of it! As it happens, this one has worked at Sherry's and Delmonico's. Man's been sick—just out of hospital. Took Gagano's job *pro tem*. But it seems it's professional etiquette with them to keep mum—doctors, priests and waiters, same lodge."

Morton sat down miserably. His world was spinning about him. If only Philippa had not looked him in the face with those angelic eyes, and denied! If only she had not held to her accusation of Victoria and made herself out such a supremely superior being! If only she had left one loophole for her own shortcomings! The escapade he would have forgiven—what girl does not need forgiveness for some dare-devil, foolish action some time in her life? Who was he to blame her?

His eyes burned and his mouth

twitched as his perfect trust in Philippa crumbled and fell from him.

He was roused by the sound of Mrs. Durham's voice, and looking up he noticed her slim, flat shoulders and the graceful sweep of her skirts. She had entered and was talking to Courney, with her back toward him. He was glad of that; he could not bear that she should see his face.

Rising quickly, he walked to the window and stood looking down on the crowded streets below, over which, ant-like, men and women swarmed and crawled. He almost wished himself one of those silent, undisturbed sleepers down in Trinity churchyard, where the headstones protruded, black with damp, from the dark-brown mould spotted over with melting snow. But he pulled himself together and turned again to the room. Mrs. Durham's face was towards him now, and he heard her voice, modulated to not ungentle tones. But he did not catch her words. He was conscious only of one decision. For the sake of what had been, he would shield Philippa; for the sake of his own illusion—the illusion, not the reality.

"You need give no further proof, if you have any," he said. "I know Uncle Morris and Fanshaw too well."

"You called me to account," Mrs. Durham replied; "I have made good my statements. Now let me appeal to you. You have lost Philippa! Do you want to lose Victoria, too? Help us to clear up this horrid slander. I think if we all use our personal influence we can turn the cogs of this slow, legal machinery with much greater speed. We can have a closer watch put on Valdeck, and employ our own detective, if necessary. Now we've worked it out this way, your uncle and I. We think that Valdeck has something vital on foot now, and so could not change his plans. He tried to countermine Victoria, when he saw that she recognized him, solely to gain time. It was playing a dangerous game, so the time needed must have been only comparatively short and the stake large. Now it's three weeks

since information was laid against him. Things must be coming to a head, and he must not give us the slip. You understand?"

"Well put, very well put!" Mr. Courncy exclaimed, quickly. "Good statement of the case. Now, Morton, I can see that, since Miss Ford's name has been connected with yours, you want to protect her, though she doesn't deserve it—wretched little yellow cat!"

"Yes," Morton nodded, gravely; "I would like to save her if it's possible."

"If she takes it all back about Victoria——"

"Publicly," cut in Mrs. Durham.

"Of course, of course," bellowed Courncy. "Whoever thought of anything else?"

"I fancy she will do that, but we mustn't make it too difficult. She's proud——"

"Vain!" sniffed Mrs. Durham.

Morton took no notice. "Let us keep all this quite to ourselves; don't let a word of it get out to the newspapers, or in common talk. Miss Ford shall own herself mistaken, and I have no doubt she will give Valdeck as the authority for her former assertions. Then we can push him to the wall all the easier, and we need have no mercy!" There was a grimness in the click of his jaw as he shut his teeth that boded ill for the suave foreigner if ever he should come within reach of Morton's long, powerful arm.

"We may count on you, then?" said Mrs. Durham. "I think, since, of course, you must see Miss Ford, you might explain matters better than I can."

"I would rather you saw her yourself," Morton said, dully; "or better still, have a talk with her aunt."

"Very well," she assented. "Morris, I think we will leave you. Sorry to have made this little scene in your office, but I know you are anxious, for your old friend Claudel's sake and his daughter's, too."

"Oh, it'll turn out all right, all right!" jerked Courncy. "You've

been a trump, a trump, madam! And, damme, if I ever get into trouble I'll come to you." The little man wrung her hand once more, then lifted his snapping black eyes, from which all the hardness had vanished, to the troubled face of his nephew.

"You're hard hit," he said, gravely, "and I'm sorry; but, my boy, better find these things out before marriage than afterward. That girl's a bad lot, for all her yellow hair and baby eyes. She's bad to the core—it's inherited, it's natural and it's cultivated. I know her! Have the courage to break your engagement—don't be a fool and let her make you believe you're tied. You've got to do the square thing—not the soft thing, mind you, but the square thing—by yourself, first and before all. Good-bye, good-bye!"

Once more Morton found himself in the elevator, being dropped downward at a sickening pace, and presently he was out in the street again.

"If you don't mind, Mrs. Durham," he heard himself saying, "I'll put you into a cab. I need exercise and I want to think, so had better walk up."

"Of course," she said, cheerily. "Don't mind me in the least. Just put me aboard a hansom." She looked up at him with such a light of sweetness in her face that in spite of his former antagonism his heart warmed toward her.

She held out her hand. "You'll believe me, won't you? It's only out of my love for Victoria that I'm pushing this thing so far. I don't usually make it my business to hound any woman down. I have a theory that, after all, a woman pays such a fearful price for everything in life that we must consider she's always on the short side of the balance sheet, and so we should be extra generous and attend to our own business. And I'm really not such a frightfully meddlesome old body."

He almost smiled at her earnestness, as he gave her his hand and she lightly settled herself in a cab.

"Good-bye!" she called.

He raised his hat as the hansom turned and began its zig-zag journey northward. Then, plunging into the crowd, he walked on mechanically.

Now it chanced that Victoria, hot and angry from the police-station episode, and Morton, sore and miserable from his interview, both started to walk off their troubles. Together they had contracted the habit. From childhood up they were wont to wear out their griefs and rages in company, walking at a furious gait, sometimes for hours in unbroken silence, till the burdened one would be moved to confidences, and then, the trouble past, they would saunter comfortably home.

In this case Victoria had the start and was further up-town, but Morton's huge stride carried him forward at greater speed than Victoria's steady swing.

The result occurred in the neighborhood of Thirty-second street and Eighth avenue. By a common impulse they had made for that region. There they had formerly indulged their mutual peripatetic propensities.

It suddenly dawned on Morton that the back of the girl walking a block or so directly in front of him was strangely familiar; that strong stride, that broad-shouldered, erect carriage, and—completing and convincing detail—the heavy hair that was struggling to let itself down. That hair bristled with helpless hairpins, and the constant gesture by which she absent-mindedly strove to push them in brought up a thousand affectionate memories.

Involuntarily he quickened his pace, closing the distance between them till only a foot or so intervened.

"Vic," he called, "hold on; wait for me!"

The girl turned abruptly, her face all stretched to speak; but she looked in his face for an instant, then moved on in silence, joining her step with his.

The years slipped back as if by a miracle; they were boy and girl again, walking off a rage in the old way.

The broad space of the avenue with

its twin lines of crowded shops, bounding the traffic, took on a friendly familiarity; every iron grating had its little history, every show-window its episode. Even the changes consequent on the lapse of time served to recall the houses that had vanished.

Gradually the old spirit took hold of them; their recent troubles and estrangement fell from them. Philippa was a name—no more; Valdeck a nightmare! And as for the worthless love that had occupied his heart, Morton woke with a start to find it utterly gone—the rainbow bubble of his senses had been dispelled. He saw clearly now, saw through the glamour to the utter sham of it; saw the narrow, calculating mind, the small, mean soul and the overwhelming vanity that swathed Philippa from top to toe in a garment of hypocrisy—he saw and did not care. His grief had disappeared with the renewal of his mental vision. Why should he regret, where there was nothing worthy of regret? He could only curse himself for a fool, and wonder that he had ever owned a doubt, or that his loyal friendship should have failed the friend beside him—his "little twin" of the old days, and always.

Victoria was busy with her own thoughts, but happy in the regained companionship of her chum. She felt instinctively the chrysalis breaking in his mind and the beautiful butterfly of their mutual understanding evolving itself more splendid than the rudimentary, though beloved, little grub of their childish affection.

Within view of the Park entrance they came to a little restaurant often frequented in former years.

"Let's go in and eat caviare," she suggested, breaking the silence.

"Let's," he answered. "Let's go in and eat caviare and drink Würzburger, and talk it all over, just as we used to."

Philippa followed her aunt's advice, and went to Europe. The influence of the commissioner saved her from public disgrace, but in her own social set she was regarded with suspicion—

her slanders against Victoria had been so positive, her retractions and apologies were so abject. Philippa did not, however, follow the other half of her aunt's advice and marry Morton before she sailed, for the very good

reason that he and Victoria made the pleasing discovery that they were—indeed, always had been—in love. They were married just after the conviction of Valdeck for the jewel robberies in New Orleans.



AT PARTING

OH, all too well, beloved, at last I know
 That for us two the parting of the ways
 Has come, and brought the ending of sweet days.
 Bid me good-bye, and loose my hand, and go.
 To-day's fair peak we ran to climb, and low
 Before us, glowing in our last sun's rays,
 The path slopes down, nor undivided stays;
 The path slopes down, but separate and slow.

Henceforward you and I alone must fare.
 Nay, look not all so sad! Was ever done
 A deed to merit all that we have won
 Of joy? I tell you, there are those whose prayer
 Is nightly on their knees that they might bear
 Our shadow, could they but have known our sun!

JOSEPHINE DODGE DASKAM.



SHE HUSBANDED HER APPEARANCE

FIFI—Mrs. Wedley always has a well-groomed appearance, hasn't she?
 BLANCHE—Yes; she has been married four times, I believe.



A HAPPY ENDING

“AND they lived happy ever after,” said Mrs. Wylde, finishing the bed-time story she was telling the children.

“Ah, got their divorce, did they?” remarked Mr. Wylde, who had heard only the concluding words.



SQUARING ACCOUNTS

HELEN—A woman, you know, won't tell her age.

JOHN—Age, however, takes revenge by telling on her.

THE TEST

HOW great a grief is this—to have you say
 That since I went away
 The skies for you have never once seemed gray;
 That you have never missed me—never known
 The bitter dreariness of being left alone.

You cannot know my sorrow! I had thought
 That for you I had wrought
 Some little skein of gladness, or had brought
 The sunlight to your life; that I had been
 Some little, faltering aid, and helped you so within.

But now—what utter grief for me to know
 The love I hoped would grow
 Within your heart, planted so long ago,
 Will never wake; for absence, dear, has shown
 You know no dreariness in being left alone!

CHARLES HANSON TOWNE.



CIRCUMSTANCES ALTER CASES

CRAWFORD—Does a woman always decline her first offer of marriage?
 CRABSHAW—That depends altogether on what age she is when it occurs.



TALES OUT OF SCHOOL

SUITOR—Your sister and I were just talking business out here on the veranda.

HER LITTLE BROTHER—Oh, no, you weren't. When a fellow begins to talk business sister always takes him into the conservatory.



NO PREFERENCE

ARKANSAW DRUGGIST—What can I show you, sir?
 RUSTIC VISITOR—D'know. What yer got?

THE BIRTH OF MUSIC

By Bliss Carman

IN Celænæ by Meander lived a youth once long ago,
And one passion great and splendid brimmed his heart to overflow,
Filled the world for him with beauty, sense and color, joy and glow.

Not ambition and not power, love nor luxury nor fame,
Beckoned him to join their pageant, summoned Marsyas by name,
Bidding unreluctant spirit dare to keep the soaring aim;

But the sorceries of music, note and rapture, tone and thrill,
Sounding the serene enchantment over meadow, stream and hill,
Blew for him the undesisting magic call-note, followed still.

And he followed. Heart of wonder, how the keen blue smoke upcurled,
From the shepherd huts to heaven! How the dew lay silver-pearled
Where sleek-sided cattle wandered through the morning of the world!

On a stream bank lay the idler dreaming dreams—for it was Spring—
And he heard the frogs in chorus make the watery marshes ring;
Heard newcomers at their nesting in the vineyards pipe and sing;

Heard the river lisp below him; heard the wind chafe reed on reed;
Every earth-impassioned creature finding vent and voice at need.
Ah! if only so could mortal longing and delight be freed!

Hark! what piercing unknown cry comes stealing o'er the forest ground,
Pouring sense and soul together in an ecstasy new-found?
Dream's fulfilment brought to pass and life untethered at a bound!

Then it pauses, and the youth beyond the river-bend perceives
A divine one in her beauty stand, half-hidden by the leaves,
Fingering a wondrous wood-pipe, whence the clear sound joys or grieves.

As he looked, entranced and musing at the marvel of the strain,
All her loveliness uncinctured with a madness touched his brain,
And love, like a vernal fever, dyed him with its scarlet stain.

But Athene, glancing downward in the silver of the stream,
As she fluted, saw her perfect mouth distorted by a seam;
Faltered, stopped, and, disconcerted, seemed to ponder half in drea

For a rueful moment; and then with reluctance tossed the reed
She had fashioned in a happy leisure mood to serve her need
Back into the tranquil river, nothing but a river weed.

All the cunning life that filled it, quenched and spilt and flung away,
To go seaward to oblivion on a wandering stream. But stay!
The young Phrygian lad has seen it—marked the current set his way—

Stooped and picked it from the water; put the treasure-trove to lip;
Blown his first breath, faint yet daring; felt the wild notes crowd and slip
Into melody and meaning from each testing finger-tip.

Then, ah, then had mortal spirit sweep and room at last to range
The lost limits of creation and the borderlands of change,
All earth's loveliness transmuting into something new and strange

All of beauty, all of knowledge, all of wonder, fused and caught
In the rhythmus of the music, weaving out of sense and thought
And a touch of love the fabric out of which the world was wrought.

And the joy of each new cadence, as the glad notes pressed and cried,
Eager for the strain's fulfilment, as they rose and merged and died
In the music's utmost measure, filled the rose-gray mountain side—

Touched the sheep-bells in the meadow, moved the rushes in the stream,
And suffused the youth with glory as he passed from theme to theme;
Made him as the gods of morning in the ampler air of dream.

Ah, what secret, what enchantment so could help the human need,
Save the breath of life that lingered in the hollow of the reed,
Since the careless mouth of beauty blessed it—with so little heed!

There he stood, a youth transfigured in the young world's golden glow,
Made immortal in a moment by the music's melting flow—
Prototype of the artist's glory for the after years to know.

There he stands for us in picture, with the pipe whereon he plays;
The slow, large-eyed cattle wonder, and the flocks forget to graze,
While upon the hill a shepherd turns and listens in amaze.

In the woods the timid creatures, reassured, approach and peer,
Half aware the charm's allurements they must follow as they hear
Is the first far-looked-for presage of the banishment of fear.

Silence falls upon the woodland, quiet settles on the plain;
Earth and air and the blue heaven, without harm or taint or stain,
Are restored to their old guise of large serenity again.

Thus the player at his piping in the early mode and grave
Took from Wisdom the inventress what the earth in bounty gave,
And therein to round completion put the beating heart and brave.

So, you artists and musicians, earth awaits perfection still;
Wisdom tarries by the brookside, beauty loiters on the hill,
For the love that shall reveal them with the yet undreamed of skill.

Love be therefore all your passion, the one ardor that ye spend
To enhance the craft's achievement with significance and trend,
Making faultless the wild strain that else were faulty to the end.

Love must lend the magic cadence—that unearthly dying fall
When the simple sweet earth-music makes us captive past recall,
And the loved one and the lover lose this world, nor care at all.

THE ADVENT OF MARY EMMA

By Edgar Fawcett

“**A**T the beginning of the season!” wailed Augusta. “It’s too dreadful! I thought she’d stay on in Paris and then go to Germany. By the middle of July it wouldn’t be so horrid to have her here. But *now!*” And Augusta, who was dark-eyed and stately, lifted both hands in tragic dismay.

“My dear,” said her mother, Mrs. Fessenden, a lady whose Junonian adipose height alone had saved her from stodginess, “we must endure the girl as we have been forced to endure so many ills. After all, she’s my——”

“Oh, you were always saying that,” bristled Augusta, “when she used to swoop down on us in New York from the Wild West! Heaven knows, she mortified us enough then. But here it will be infinitely worse. And just as affairs look so promising, too. It’s—it’s——” the aggrieved maiden paused for a word, and then pounced on one—“it’s heart-rending!”

The Fessendens were New York people who had emigrated, three years ago, to Europe. After her husband’s death Mrs. Fessenden had found herself possessed of a very much smaller income than she had expected. She had enough, however, to maintain herself and her child in moderate elegance. Her lord had been a very popular Wall street man, and she had gathered about her a congenial throng of friends, among whom she shone as a leader. The Fessendens had lived handsomely, and no vulgar people had been permitted to cross the threshold of their prosperous home in Thirty-seventh street. But in her widowhood, and at the inopportune

time when economy slipped its lean arm about the buxom waist of extravagance, Mrs. Fessenden found her brain spinning with the delicate yet heady wine of social ambition. She never knew just how she caught her society craze. It may have come from reading in the newspapers that certain folk were having exclusive pleasures while she did not know one of these merry-makers. So she promptly began trying to know them. As the craze grew she cut nearly all her former friends, and received in consequence their per-fervid contempt. Having thus ins- sanely burnt her bridges, retreat be- came to her impossible. She pushed on, with young “Gussie,” now almost eighteen, at her side. Gussie, by the way, soon became Augusta through her own desire. At first the mother’s task appeared colossal, nor did its difficulty diminish as months wore on. She was clever, tactful, even very alluring when she pleased; but she lacked two essentials—money and an- tecedents. She had arrived too late, and hence had not really arrived at all. Yet her tenacity did not flinch. Half one Summer she spent at Nar- ragansett, and fled from it, dragging Augusta after her, in horror at its “mixed crowds.” The remaining half she passed at Bar Harbor, and there managed to pick up a few delectable friends. Most of these failed her in town, however, for it crept about that she had been nobody before becoming a frantic pusher. There was piteous desperation in her attempted siege of Newport, with Augusta now fighting stanchly at her side. They got to one or two of the Casino balls, and for

the rest it might be said that their career was a succession of civil snubs. A few malcontents like themselves came to their tiny cottage, and also a few eligible men whom Augusta's big black eyes and symmetrical figure attracted. But the latter soon dropped away. Augusta herself somehow did not attract them. Perhaps they saw that she wanted to use them in getting to know their smart mammas, cousins or aunts; perhaps they found in her that fatal fault which the American fashionable youth never pardons—a lack of spirits and an utter powerlessness to flirt. The truth was that Augusta now lived in an atmosphere of intense nervous strain. All sentiment had been banished from her soul. She betrayed at every turn that eager craving for position with which her mother's designs and disappointments had infected her.

Those repulsed as were the Fessendens almost always take their woes to Paris. They went there, full of the usual sarcasms about New York vulgarity and the dominance of the plutocrat. At first they found Paris delightful. It is the Mecca of disgruntled Americans, and they could live there cheaply while yet conscious that they were looked on as gentlefolk. The genial ambassador was polite to them, and they attended some of his receptions—decidedly of the public and more "patriotic" sort. They had brought a few letters to certain resident New Yorkers, and these received them with courtesy. It soon became evident that they were in a circle where dislike of the United States mildly, yet markedly, reigned. This fact at first charmed them, and poured oil on their wounds. But by degrees they perceived that they were not at all in the right set. The right set was just as positive here as in New York, though not advertised with newspaper flamboyance. The whole experience at length struck them as semi-bohemian and unsatisfying.

Just as they were lamenting that they had made another mistake and had only got out of the frying-pan

into the fire, an elderly lady, whose name need not be mentioned here, came across them and took pity on them. She was a Boston woman who had lived twenty-five years in Paris, and her *salons* were full of the elect. She was very gracious, fancying she saw an unexploited belle in Augusta, whose stately type, blent with youth, had pleased her practiced eye. This was a great chance for the Fessendens, but they entirely lost it. To visit their new supporter was not merely to meet Americans who held themselves high; great diligence and energy had brought to these drawing-rooms, in the Rue Clément Marot, not a few representatives of the Faubourg St. Germain constituency. One heard French spoken almost as much as English, and all the Americans present spoke the language glibly, often with the best Parisian accent, as if it were their native tongue. Mrs. Fessenden could not speak a word of French. Augusta, who prided herself on her thorough education, had learned the language at school in New York, and could read it more or less fluently. She thought, until she found herself surrounded by those who dealt with it in unconscious aptitude, that she could speak it rather well. But she was soon confronted with a sense of her grave misjudgment. Entire sentences would elude her ear, idioms that she had never heard would clatter like a shower of bullets. Embarrassment besieged her, and embarrassment has never improved any woman's looks. Once more both she and her mother grew depressed in the presence of a new failure. Augusta fell into the habit of imprudently declaring that she couldn't get on at all with Frenchmen. There are always Englishmen in Paris who value such sentiments, and it happened one evening that she confided her aversion to the young Earl of Lowestoft. He and his mother were both passing through Paris, and were guests at this particular function in the Rue Clément Marot. The earl, a bachelor, had not yet reached his thirties. He had a high Norman

nose, a pair of crystal blue eyes, a small, ruddy, boyish mouth, a tall, muscular form, and a great deal of money. It was said of him that he had been falling in love—and out—ever since he had left Oxford.

That evening it appeared as if Augusta Fessenden were going to be his new fancy. She drove home with her mother through the scintillant boulevards in an ecstasy of hope. He was coming the next day to see her, and he had introduced her to his mother. Lady Lowestoft had been kind—so kind! She had asked her why she and her mamma didn't come over to England for the season, and had said that though she was herself departing on the morrow for her own country, after having made a long stay in Italy, it would give her great pleasure to see Miss Fessenden at any time in Eaton Square. She hadn't a card, but the address wouldn't be difficult to find.

It is no exaggeration to say that from this night Augusta and her mother became confirmed Anglomaniacs. They assured each other that after all England was the sole fitting abode for them. Lord Lowestoft took Augusta driving in the Champs Élysées and gave her and Mrs. Fessenden enchanting dinners at Voisin's, Durand's and the Hôtel Ritz. Then, after a little less than a fortnight, he lamentingly announced that he must cross the Channel. To the last he had almost made love to Augusta; but invariably it had been "almost." He went away without bidding her good-bye, but sent her a note expressing his great desire to meet her in London very soon.

They were both furious. Mrs. Fessenden wept, and said that her daughter had mismanaged most fatally. Lord Lowestoft was in love—she felt confident of it. But Augusta had never relaxed enough. Such men as he were repelled so easily; they expected, and quite as a matter of course, a certain homage.

"I did the best I could," muttered Augusta, with hard, set face.

"Ah!" mourned her mother, "I see. You don't love him. You've

never loved yet in your life, and you couldn't, or wouldn't, make believe."

"I tried to make believe," said the girl. "Perhaps I failed. It seems to me that you and I are always failing. But I want to make another effort. I want to go to London—for the season. It's only late April now, and we might get a little house in some nice quarter."

Her mother acquiesced. They knew a handful of Americans in London, and looked them up at their various lodgings. Meanwhile they stayed, for purposes of temporary economy, at a certain boarding-house in the Bloomsbury region, filled with people whom they liked simply for being English. They were excessively ashamed of their residence, and dreamed horrid dreams of being met in their walks abroad by Lady Lowestoft or her son. But their hearts failed when they learned how enormously expensive would be "a little house in some nice quarter." They had no income for any such luxurious expenditure. But every hour they remained in London they liked it better. On all sides they heard their own language in what seemed to them the most delightful musical guise. They fell to imitating the intonations of the young women who served them in the shops. Mrs. Fessenden made slower progress than her daughter. Augusta would often give her little lessons in the idiom, improvising sentences that her mother would repeat. Thus, for example:

"I'm going down into the City as fast as I can, to see a haberdasher and a greengrocer."

"You said it dreadfully through the nose that time," Augusta would now and then affirm. "Try again, mamma, and remember to say 'farst,' not 'fast.' That's better. Now for another trial. I'll copy your next lesson on paper and read it aloud to you as it ought to be spoken."

"Very well. As you please."

"So many thanks, my dear Mrs. Brown," Augusta recommended. "I shall need lots of things from the linen draper you recommend. But you tell

me that he has no nice stays, and that his lift makes one giddy. Fancy!"

This harmless rubbish, or something resembling it, would not always please Augusta by its mode of repetition. "I should never mistake you for English, mamma," she would lament. And so curiously inert had become Mrs. Fessenden's regard for her own country that she would heave a solemn sigh at this disheartening verdict.

In throes of anxiety mother and daughter searched the West End for a suitable home. They had almost given up in despair and resolved to take fairly modish lodgings near Piccadilly, which they thought shockingly dear and quite unsuited to their planned-out season, when a great stroke of luck befell them. For a sum relatively trifling an agent offered them four months' lease of a furnished house—and rather well furnished at that—in Devonshire street, Portland Place. What curious reasons were at the root of this remarkable happening the Fessendens were too delighted to inquire.

They had been settled in their new and highly reputable refuge about three weeks, when the letter of their kinswoman, Miss Mary Emma Jenks, disastrously arrived.

Lord Lowestoft had paid several visits, and calls had been exchanged between his mother and themselves. The Eaton Square house, with its old portraits—not a few of them deplorable daubs—its gigantic and serene butler, its really fine Chippendale or Eastlake furniture, its cabinets of choice porcelain, its gloomy dignity and repose, had pierced them with a ridiculous awe. They raved to each other afterward about its quiet grandeur, its air of exquisite refinement.

Lady Lowestoft had not yet begun her regular "Thursdays," which were usually very crowded affairs. But on the occasion when the Fessendens first appeared at her home there were also two other guests in her drawing-rooms. One of these she introduced, in her off-hand

way, as Lady Laight. For a moment Augusta's head swam. "Another member of the English aristocracy!" she said, with a glance toward her mother, who was equally agitated. Lady Laight was a tenuous woman, with a sort of long, wandering nose that ended in a red tip. She was amiable, but talked little, and wore a suit of shabby gray woolen stuff. "So distinguished and yet so unassuming," was the comment Augusta afterward pronounced on her. "I liked her *very* much better than that showy little Mrs. Hobbs."

But in reality the distinguished and unassuming Lady Laight was a knight's widow, living in a tiny suburban house and eking out a very slender income by doing certain fancy work of the Kensington-stitch kind, some of which Lady Lowestoft had compassionately purchased. On the other hand, the showy little Mrs. Hobbs was niece of a powerful peer and wife of a courted millionaire.

The Fessendens, alas, had not yet learned the nature of their revered hostess's "Thursdays." Possessing an almost unrivaled place in English society, the Countess of Lowestoft was so broadly democratic that long ago she had been disrespectfully dubbed "the mixer." She was a fat, dowdy little woman, with a chronic flush that Augusta called her "splendid English color," and she agonized all her patrician relatives by going, as they mournfully complained, into the highways and hedges for her friends. It conferred not the slightest distinction to be seen at her house, though to walk at her son's side along the grand avenue of Portland Place was a vastly different matter. Now and then, during such strolls, his lordship would bow to people in open carriages, and then the heart of Augusta would indeed flutter with pride. Once he proposed that they should do a little sight-seeing together. "Don't you want to get some really striking glimpses of London," he said, "now that you're here for the first time?"

But immediately Augusta had visions of Cook's tourists, poking their noses everywhere, and the temptation to lie came on her—and she lied. She told Lord Lowestoft that London wasn't new to her; that she had come here with her late father several years ago.

"Ah," said the young man, opening his blue eyes quite wide, "I thought you said—"

"Mamma may have told you that *she* had not been here before," struck in Augusta, secretly terrified at the chance of discovery, and for once regretting the course her silly-mindedness had taken. "She—er—didn't come with poor papa and myself."

"You know Westminster Abbey, then?" said the earl, half-questioningly.

Augusta felt herself sinking deeper in the mire. "Oh, merely as a child would remember it. I—er—couldn't have been more than twelve."

Soon they hailed a hansom, and were driven to the Abbey. At first she was on thorns lest he should ask her some imperiling question. But this dread vanished after a time, for when they stood in Poets' Corner, beside the bust of Longfellow, her companion's manner became so charged with tender geniality that she fancied him on the verge of proposing. However, he did not make any such bold excursion into the *pays du tendre*, and Augusta went back to Devonshire street in the lovely, pearly May weather with sensations that ill suited so halcyon an afternoon. When she told her mother of the falsehood she had perpetrated, and begged her to support it now that it was uttered, Mrs. Fessenden gave distinct though highly reprimanding assent.

"It was horrible of you—horrible!" she alleged.

"I think it horrible, too, mamma. But it can't be remedied now."

Augusta was by no means conscienceless. Yet she thought the threatened coming of her cousin, Mary Emma Joyce, when it was announced

the next morning, more horrible still. There was no averting it. Mary Emma could not be snubbed; her mother, Mrs. Fessenden's sister, would never have forgiven any such attempt. The Joyces were very rich, and though Mrs. Fessenden spoke so pityingly now and then of her "poor invalid sister out West," she was never mentally free from the belief that some day, perhaps quite soon, that sister would pass away and leave her a handsome legacy from the fortune the generous husband had already settled on his wife.

Mary Emma's note was very succinct. She had come over with a family named Hopper, who were intimate friends. But after they had all reached Paris and stayed there several weeks the itinerary of the Hoppers had not pleased Mary Emma. There had been no quarrel, but the Hoppers wished to go one way and she another. She had heard that London was charming at this time of year, and she had made up her mind to spend not less than two months with her relatives. "That is, if you will have me," her letter ran. "We can all three keep house or lodge together. I've come over with lots of money. Pa has been very liberal; he always is. Later on the Hoppers will pull up in London, and then we are all going to make some rural trip in a sort of zig-zag up into Scotland. I heard of your new address in the luckiest way. You'd left it at your banker's, and your banker happened to be mine."

That same evening, in the luminous vernal gloaming, a cab drove up to the Fessendens' door. From it jauntily alighted Miss Mary Emma Joyce. Behind her was another cab, a four-wheeler, its top and interior both stored with luggage.

"You really came alone?" said Mrs. Fessenden, after the greetings.

"N—yes, Aunt Kate. That is, a gentleman friend was crossing at the same time, and we took the cars and boat in each other's company. He's real nice. His name is Egbert Lynn. He belongs to our town, and his

father's a great friend of pa's. We met him in Paris one day, and we all nearly screamed. It did seem so funny, somehow. It kind of sent us all back four thousand miles, right in a jiffy. Now don't you look suspicious, Gussie dear! I ain't a bit mashed on Egbert, nor is he on me. Ma says he's a splendid match; shesays it sort of remindingly now and then. I suppose he is—he ought to be; he's the only child, and his father, who just rolls in money, dotes on him. But I tell ma and pa that when I marry it shall be a man I love. I've never been in love since I was fifteen, and of course all that was folderol. But you'll like Egbert when he comes and calls. He's real pretty, too; he's the only pretty man I've ever cared a snap for."

Miss Joyce was unpinning her neat toque, which completed a tailor-made costume of faultless cut and fit. She was dressed as if the Rue de la Paix had sent her forth equipped for precisely the voyage she had just taken. She looked short beside the tall Augusta, but in reality she was of average height. Her figure had every claim to perfection, but this could by no means be said of her face. The features brimmed with so much merriment and sweetness, however, that one quite forgot their irregularity. Her eyes were large and charming, twin lairs of shadowy violet lights and tiny sparkles like powdery silver, while the infantile rosininess and creaminess of her coloring were past all cavil. These somehow made her a beauty without being one. The wild-flower tints of the English maiden were as distinct from their bloom as the petal of an eglantine from the petal of a camellia.

She was healthily tired, and went to bed a short time after dinner, of which she partook with languid appetite. "I had a monstrous lunch on the boat," she explained, "and then we perfectly stuffed ourselves, Egbert and I, out of a small hamper that they stuck at us through the window of the Dover cars."

Augusta and her mother sat and

stared forlornly at each other after she had retired.

"To think of it!" mourned Mrs. Fessenden. "All that baggage——"

"Luggage, mamma."

"Yes, I meant luggage. And yet not a sign of a maid! How on earth has she got on?"

You could hear Augusta's foot tapping the carpet. "Oh, she'd get on in Kamtchatka. But the great point is, how on earth are *we* going to get on?"

Mrs. Fessenden's head went from side to side, blankly, like a wax lady's in a *coiffeur's* window.

"I'm thinking," suddenly said Augusta, with a kind of confessional inflection, "about—about *him*."

"Lord Lowestoft, yes. He'll have to meet her, of course."

He met her the next afternoon. Mary Emma had spent half the day at the Tower of London. It was cloudy, with spurts of rain, and on this account her relatives advised her postponing the visit. But no; nothing could induce any postponement.

"I've always said," she insisted, "that I'd see the Tower of London as soon as I possibly could after getting here. I've wanted to see it for years, and if neither of you care to go I'll just take a cab and go alone—I've read so much about it, and I know English history straight down from William the Conqueror to Queen Victoria like a book, though I don't want to be boastful one mite. I guess Egbert Lynn may be here by ten o'clock. He said he'd come if he possibly could. But if he isn't on time I'll go without him."

Egbert arrived a little before ten. As Mary Emma introduced him, the mother and daughter exchanged relieved looks. He was a strong-built, open-faced man, admirably well dressed. He had the American voice, the American briskness of manner and action; in brief, he was the typical American young gentleman. He bore no resemblance to the rich youths of the Eastern seaboard cities, who assume so often a mode of speech and deportment more

colonial than anything to be found in Canada. He was natural and also national, suggesting honesty and kindheartedness, while leaving simplicity and lack of affectation quite beyond a shade of doubt.

"He's an agreeable disappointment, this Mr. Egbert Lynn," said Mrs. Fessenden, after Mary Emma and her friend had both departed.

"In his way, yes," agreed Augusta.

"Did you notice how he seemed—er—struck with you?" said Mrs. Fessenden. "He acted as if he somehow couldn't keep his eyes away from you."

"I didn't notice it," replied Augusta, who had already begun to ask herself whether Lord Lowestoft would drop in that rainy afternoon for tea.

She was pouring for him a second cup when Mary Emma, alone and with all her wonted self-possession, entered the drawing-room.

"Tea!" she cried. "Oh, splendid! I'm dying for some. Home I never used to take it, but somehow, here, across the big pond, I've found that I——"

She paused, perceiving Lord Lowestoft, who had slowly and rather surprisedly risen. After the introduction there followed what to Augusta and her mother was a desolating pause.

Mary Emma dropped into a chair. "Hasn't it grown muggy and warm?" she said, fanning herself with her hat, and she said it quite as much to his lordship as to her aunt or cousin.

For some reason it happened that the former made reply. "Yes, we seem almost on the verge of a fog this afternoon."

"Mercy! A London fog! I do wish one would come. I'm crazy to see one. But this isn't the right time, is it?"

"No," said Lord Lowestoft, with interest and amusement suddenly commingled. "It would ruin the reputation of our English May, which some people think bad enough already, if a fog should now appear."

"They come only in the Fall," said Mrs. Fessenden, who felt that the talk should not be allowed to drop.

"Not Fall, mamma, Autumn,"

whispered Augusta. Then, louder, to her cousin, "Did you enjoy yourself at the Tower?"

"Oh, yes. It was elegant."

"Aren't you rather damp?" Augusta continued. It would not have proved displeasing to her if Mary Emma had gone away to get dry. Indeed, just before she appeared Mrs. Fessenden had glimpsed the expediency of soon withdrawing.

"Damp?" laughed Miss Joyce. "My, no! I'm as dry as toast. The Tower was lovely. I nearly cried when I saw the place where poor Anne Boleyn had her head chopped off. But there's a good deal of doubt as to whether it *was* the place." And here, to the growing astonishment of Lord Lowestoft, she plunged into a series of historic opinions and conclusions that no guide-book supplies, which betokened sincere study. Her tongue danced; her eyes had never glistened more keenly. From the ill-starred second spouse of Henry VIII. she glided, with an easy, picturesque fluency, to the Bloody Tower, avowing what she felt certain to have happened there and what she was confident had not happened there. Then she had some decided views, crisply expressed, about other structures and other events popularly connected with them. She denied the Duke of Clarence's death by drowning in a butt of Malmsey within the walls of the Bowyer Tower, and the murder of Henry VI. in the Wakefield Tower, and so on, saying it all without a shadow of ostentation or pedantry. At the end she was solely addressing Lord Lowestoft, for the eyes of her kindred had wandered, while his were steadfast gleams of attention.

"How bored he must be!" thought Augusta. "But he's so well bred he won't show it. She's behaving like a Western schoolmarm. To this kind of tedium has the boasted 'universal education' of our country brought us!"

Lord Lowestoft gave no sign of boredom, however, in his quick, earnest response.

"You'd put hundreds of English folk to shame, Miss Joyce, with all

your facile knowledge of our past. But that is the way. I've heard American tourists talk to one another in Westminster Abbey—well, not as capably as you've just done, but so cleverly that the rural tourists of my own land gathered behind them to pick up crumbs of information."

This mention of the Abbey made Augusta's flesh crawl with vague alarm. She felt her mother's eyes on her, but pretended to be unaware of them.

"Oh, of all places, Westminster Abbey!" exclaimed Mary Emma. "I shouldn't have gone to the Tower first! I somehow had it prick my conscience to-day that I'd snubbed the adorable Abbey! I believe I could almost go through some parts of it with my eyes shut. But, of course, that's 'talking through my hat,' as Egbert Lynn would say." She turned toward Mrs. Fessenden and Augusta. "I suppose you've been, of course."

"Miss Augusta went with me yesterday," said Lord Lowestoft. "But the novelty was worn off, I fear, since she'd seen it when here in London before."

Mary Emma started. "Oh," she said, looking at her cousin. "So this isn't your first time, Gussie? I thought you stayed right on in Paris till you crossed to England."

"Did you?" replied Augusta, wondering if she had grown palpably paler, and striving to grasp at some new fabric of invention. Then, lamely failing, she gave her mother a glance of stony despair.

"I meant," said Lord Lowestoft, "your cousin's earlier visit to London, several years ago, with her father."

Mary Emma looked puzzled. "Why, you never came here till this time, Gussie," she impetuously shot out, though not with the least unkindness. "Uncle James never went abroad at all."

Then a brazening ardor—that of the animal at bay—showed itself in Augusta. "You make a mistake," she said, and focused on her cousin eyes whose calm covered in-

ward turmoils. But the very amiability of her tone was self-betraying; it rang too stringent and factitious. "You must have forgotten the little trip I made with papa, one Summer. Am I not right about this, mamma?" And she transferred her gaze to the face of her mother.

"Oh, yes—quite right," said Mrs. Fessenden.

Her aunt's broken tones and fluttered air acted like magic on Mary Emma. She loathed all deceit; but this was not the place or hour to arraign it. "Oh," she said, with a smile that she did not know had a pained glimmer. Then, fumbling with the hat she still held, and dropping her eyes: "Please excuse me; my—memory—must somehow have got twisted."

Lord Lowestoft soon afterward departed, and by this time Mary Emma had made up her mind just how to act. She couldn't afford to have a quarrel with the Fessendens, and besides, she genuinely liked them both. If this patrician gentleman had been fooled by them it was no affair of hers. The change in Augusta's mode of speaking, and the partial and droller change in Mrs. Fessenden's, had already made it clear to her shrewd mind just why such deception had been practiced. If possible, she concluded, let it be silence for silence. She had always known that her relatives thought her a trifle barbaric, but she possessed a nature as full of charity as it was exempt from all hint of self-esteem. She had her flashes of temper at times, but these were rare, and they never concerned any slight, real or fancied, given to herself—inside, it must be added, the safe, preservative bounds of personal dignity. She had a curious incapacity for hating anybody. On the other hand, like her cousin Augusta she had never known what it was to love as all women are credited with loving at least once in their lives. This was the tangential point between two souls and temperaments utterly differing in all other regards. Perhaps, as days went on,

Augusta realized the intrinsic sweetness of her cousin's heart and mind more clearly than previous meetings had disclosed it.

Many days now passed, and May drifted into June. There was no denying that the gaieties that had brought brightening influence into the Devonshire street domicile were chiefly introduced there by Mary Emma. Egbert Lynn would take a box or several stalls for some fresh and lauded play; he would arrange, with his alert, American gift of "getting up," an impromptu little dinner at one of the best hotels or a favorite restaurant; he would plan suddenly, when the morrow promised to be one of special fineness, a launch party on the Thames. As for acquaintances, it roused amazement in the Fessendens to discover what a bevy of agreeable and well-bred people Mary Emma and Egbert Lynn had got to know on the steamer or in Paris. They were English people, for the most part, who had been spending a certain term overseas; and when the wealth of Miss Joyce's father as a railway grandee had failed to transpire among them, they were apt to have heard of Egbert's father, a noted landowner and grain merchant, superlatively rich. It seemed strange to Augusta that these women, with their melodious voices and gentle gestures, should not be repelled by her cousin's vocal burr and volatile bearing; yet they all gave signs of taking Mary Emma very genially for granted. With the men it was even more flattering; they laughed at her jokes, entered into the spirit of her audacities, and grouped about her with a persistence in which the ripest sympathy was manifest.

"Your cousin," said Mrs. Bouverie, a pretty blonde, to Augusta during one of the enchanting Thames voyages, "is a born belle. Observe how the men group about her. My husband and Lord Lowestoft look at present as if they shared the innings between them."

Lord Lowestoft! Augusta felt the fairy riverside turn sere and leafless

while this last light-spoken sentence was uttered. He had scarcely addressed her thus far since they had begun their sail. Last night, at the opera, whither he had taken her mother, Mary Emma, Egbert Lynn and herself, it had been quite the same. She did not remember now how pleasantly Egbert's frank, unaffected talk had appealed to her.

"I—I thought," she said, hesitatingly, to Mrs. Bouverie, "that you English folk did not like the American girl when quite so crudely developed."

"Crudely?" Mrs. Bouverie opened her amber eyes. She was a woman of the world, went everywhere in London and knew everybody. At once she divined jealousy in this tall, demure girl, whom she somehow could not place. Was this an American trying not to be American?—she seemed rather artificial and stupid. "Crudely?" she repeated. "Oh, but we like genuineness, you know. It's quite *passé de mode* with us to call a well-educated girl like that vulgar because she doesn't behave as we do. We're outliving our insularity—at least toward our transatlantic kin."

"But you have such lovely voices; and surely, my cousin's—"

"Oh, we're tired of our lovely voices!" her companion laughed. "We want sometimes to hear our language—your language—spoken with that new, wake-me-up sort of note. It's immensely refreshing. And yet, why—pardon me—but why do you not speak in the same American way? I don't detect your nationality in your tones, except now and then."

Augusta did not relish the "now and then," and drew herself up a little. "I've been taken," she said, "more than once for an Englishwoman!"

"You! *Jamais de la vie!*" said Mrs. Bouverie, with sharp emphasis. She had no particular wish to be unkind, but the scent of duplicity in any shape was a hard one for her to sniff composedly.

Augusta gulped down her indignation with mute displeasure. Afterward Egbert Lynn came and seated

himself beside her. She had grown to feel with him a certain delicately pungent sense of intimacy. It was like putting her feet into fur-lined slippers, donning a loose robe and perusing a winsome novel.

"Don't you think it rather odd," she asked him, "that Mary Emma—I do so wish she'd let mamma and me call her either Mary or Emma, but she won't—should attract English people as she does?"

"N—no," he said, loiteringly, and laughing a little. "She's such a novelty to them. For instance, Mr. Bouverie is a descendant, more or less remote, of the great Duke of Wellington. Somebody mentioned this, and she at once began questioning him about his ancestor's life and doings. She found him lamentably ignorant in some particulars, and she began to scold him. Her education, you know, is really good, though she's not priggish. To them it's a wonderfully fresh American type. Out West, with us, it isn't fresh at all, though I grant that Mary Emma is a bit exceptional."

Augusta scanned his virile, candid face. She wondered if he guessed that she liked him; she felt sure that he liked her. Could he have divined her chagrin about the desertion of somebody else, and was it only pity that made him so constantly seek her side, on these little festal occasions? At first his attentions had no flavor of welcome; but now all that phase had altered.

Her mind was in a tumult when she got home that evening. Her talk with Egbert had lasted a long time. He had said certain things, there on the silken water between the umbrageous banks, which brimmed for her with conviction. How strange if she really found herself in love with him! She remembered his eligibility, but that came as an afterthought. She was constantly haunted by *him*—she who but yesterday had lived with a loveless heart among ambitions! But the ambitions, like a troop of hidden imps, presently deserted their lair. She had longed for some days past to have an expla-

nation with Lord Lowestoft. Her mother had often urged this course. Mrs. Fessenden had positive views on the whole question.

"Pooh! my dear," she would say; "can't you see that his devotion to Mary Emma is only an affair of pique?"

"I doubt it, mamma."

"That's because, like many another girl in like circumstances, you're near-sighted."

"Short-sighted, they say in England, mamma."

"Oh, well, your sensible course is to get him alone and tell him that you foolishly deceived him as to having been here before. It's not a mortal sin; he'd be sure to forgive it."

One day soon after Augusta acted on this suggestion. Mary Emma had gone to pay a visit or two, and Lord Lowestoft happened to drop in at tea time; Mrs. Fessenden, hopefully politic, chose not to be present. Augusta, nerved for the ordeal, coolly avoided all delay. The return of Mary Emma was not to be prophesied with any accuracy; she might come in a few minutes hence or remain indefinitely away.

Augusta told Lord Lowestoft of her cousin's absence, while she made his tea. "I suppose," she added, with a pensive slowness, "that you will not remain very long now."

He gave a laugh that ended feebly. "Do you think I came to see no one except—?"

"I think," she interrupted, "that you have never forgiven me."

"Forgiven you?"

"Ah, you must recollect! I know, indeed, that you have recollected only too well! You—you saw me completely cornered, and in the most pitiable way!" She went on speaking, and perceived that his face had grown compassionate, sympathetic. "It was all so wildly foolish of me. I look back on it as something done by somebody else. Such absurd, false shame! It could never happen now, and my worst enemy, if I have one, would not dare call me deceitful."

"I am sure that worst enemy does

not exist," he answered. "Do you know, I'd really forgotten the whole affair. And at best, pray remember, I could only have suspected."

"Completely forgotten!" ran Augusta's quick reflection. "Has Mary Emma driven the whole matter from his brain?"

"Perhaps, then," she said aloud, "I've been additionally stupid to remind you of it. You may now—" the words stuck in her throat a little—"act toward me more indifferently still."

He paled, then flushed. "It has not been indifference. Far from that. If it has seemed so, I am the one to ask pardon."

In silence they fixedly looked at each other.

"I see," said Augusta; "it has been absorption." He did not answer. Shattering the pause, a little later, she suddenly pursued: "Do you love my cousin?"

The question made him draw back, startled. But his discomposure was soon quelled. "Yes," he responded.

"Have you asked her to be your wife?" she went on, sturdily.

"Yes." As the word left him, Lord Lowestoft rose and came close to Augusta's side. "Yes," he repeated.

His companion looked up at him with every facial line steadied. "Well, then, you have only to speak with my mother. Her parents are far away, you know."

"I came here to speak with you," he said.

"With me? How? Why?" She felt herself almost drowning under the waters of an ungovernable wrath.

He leaned down and gently touched her arm. She wanted to fling his hand away. Its contiguity made her nerves tingle with a sense of insult.

"I thought that you might have some influence, some power of suasion," he said, "for she has refused me. She will not be my wife."

"Oh!" dropped from Augusta. She sat stunned, her anger gone, thrills of secret triumph replacing it. "Mary Emma is unlike—everybody else," she stammeringly found voice. "I have

no influence. She would merely smile, or laugh me down if I attempted to exert any."

"You make me very unhappy," he said. He was plainly agitated. "Oh, let it pass, then." He caught her limp hand and pressed it. "Good-bye."

"Good-bye," she answered. Before her bewilderment could grasp the fact that he was going, he had disappeared.

Her mother presently came and joined her. "Why on earth did Lord Lowestoft hurry away like that?" she inquired.

Augusta told her everything, in a stifled, perplexed tone.

"Refused him! Mary Emma! I can't believe it."

"Oh, everybody isn't made of selfishness and greed and cunning, as we are!" flashed Augusta.

Mrs. Fessenden visibly stiffened. "You are terrible! Undutiful is no word for you!"

"You had your duty toward me, mamma. How did you fulfil it? By taking the heart out of my breast and putting a piece of clockwork there instead; by teaching me that life for us women is a mere sordid gamble; by stripping from marriage every sacred association and leaving it a coarse, contemptible barter!"

Mrs. Fessenden flushed angrily, then melted into tears. At this moment Mary Emma, looking very pretty in a picture hat, a feather boa and a Summer dress of airy fabric dashed with little mauve butterflies, crossed the threshold. Silently weeping, Mrs. Fessenden sat in shadow.

"Well, of all motley mixtures," Mary Emma cried, beginning to pull off her long lavender gloves, "Lady Lowestoft's to-day was the strangest."

An impulse seized Augusta, and she yielded to it. "Perhaps you wouldn't say that if you'd accepted Lord Lowestoft's offer of marriage."

Instantly all gaiety went out of the girl's face, while her figure swerved, as if thus to parry a blow.

"He told you?" she asked, sharply.

"Yes."

Mary Emma began to roam the room. Mrs. Fessenden had furtively dried her tears; she and Augusta sat watching and listening.

"At first I meant to accept him. It was yesterday, and not far from here. We were strolling under those beautiful chestnut trees in Regent's Park. The great blazing flower-beds on each side of the broad walk peeped at us and sent us little, sweet-scented messages between the tree trunks. He'd already hinted it; now he hinted it stronger, and the next I knew he'd said it right out."

"And you—you wouldn't—have him?" lapsed from Mrs. Fessenden, in an excited stumble of syllables.

"No. I like him, but I don't love him. I've never loved any man yet. Of course, it will come to me some day; it comes, they say, to all. I guess I know pretty well by this time just what he could make me. But being a great lady and being happy as a great lady are two mighty different things. I felt so grateful to him and so sorry for him that I wanted to kiss him right there, with all the stragglers looking at us, nurses and babies and all. He wouldn't believe me. It wasn't conceit, for he isn't conceited. But I understood; he's never been crossed in anything all his life long. I told him that, and I told him he must face the fact of my not being able to love him as a wife should. But I said more—you know what a chatterbox I am! I couldn't help babbling on. 'Look here,' I said; 'you've got to crush it all down. We'd never get on together—never in this world. I'm Mary Emma Joyce and you're an English earl. Oh, you're democratic enough; I recognize that. But your friends and relations ain't. They think me a kind of curiosity now, and laugh at my fun, for I was born jolly. But if I married you they'd play another tune. They'd come plump out and call me vulgar. And they'd be right—from their point of view. I'm not vulgar in my thoughts, in my spirit, in my principles or in my practices. But I seem so, looked

at from their eyes, and I thoroughly comprehend why I should. And there's no changing me. I'm a leopard that must keep its spots till it dies. I want to travel a great deal more; I'd like to go globe-trotting if I could, and some day I hope to. But I should never be contented if I wasn't sure of pulling up at my old home out West. I expect to marry, sooner or later, a Western man. I guess he'll be somebody like Egbert Lynn, a Western gentleman that I've got to be awfully fond of in the one only way. For I'm just like a Jew; I'm clannish, and I want a husband—unless it's my fate to be an old maid—who is one of my own tribe.' Well, I talked to Lord Lowestoft like that," finished Mary Emma, who had now ceased her panther-like paces to and fro. She stood beside a table, with fingers straying among its books and ornaments.

Neither Augusta nor her mother spoke. This revelation of honesty, candor and naturalness had thrall'd them into silence.

After a few more moments Mary Emma gave a high, bubbling laugh. Then she slipped to Augusta, caught up a cushion, and was soon kneeling on it at her cousin's feet.

"Oh, isn't life queer? Lord Lowestoft came to you and poured out his woes. To-day I met Egbert at that pretty Mrs. Abbot Courtenay's, and he poured out his woes to me. He's afraid you wouldn't have him if he asked you."

"And what did you say?" quavered Augusta, feeling such a thrill of the heart as she had never known before.

"That he must go and find out for himself." She stared up at Augusta's crimsoning face. "Men are such geese! But oh, you do care for him!" She sprang to her feet. "You do, you do!" Then she kissed Augusta on either cheek. "And you shall have him—there! If he were only here now!"

A servant entered at this moment, and visitors followed, but Egbert was not among them.

"Too bad!" Mary Emma mourned,

in an undertone. "It would have been like a pretty scene in a play if he had come just now, wouldn't it?" Later she said to her aunt:

"That letter I received this morning—I hadn't time to read it, so I put it in my pocket and got through it during my cab-drives from place to place. It was written by Ada Hopper. They've altered their plans and are coming to London in four or five days. So I must leave you and join them in their Northern tour. I'm afraid, Aunt Kate, you're not very sorry!"

"My dear child!" replied Mrs. Fessenden. The reply was oracular; it could be construed either way.

Other ladies and gentlemen dropped in, but not till the last of them were departing did Egbert Lynn arrive. Somehow—was it through Mary Emma's connivance?—he found Augusta his only hostess.

Nearly an hour afterward, when the long midsummer day was beginning to wane, Mary Emma came into the drawing-room, with an absent, innocent air. But this instantly changed when she caught a glimpse of Egbert's face.

"You idiot!" she said, shaking both his hands just as Mrs. Fessenden entered. "You fancied that Augusta had set her cap for some titled English swell. Now, you see, it was nothing of the sort."

Augusta glided to her mother and whispered a few words in her ear.

"Since you really love him," Mrs. Fessenden whispered back. "But really, your burst of temper this afternoon——"

"Won't you forgive me for it, mamma? It was because I had somehow found a new meaning in things. I seemed to see a hundred wrong roads to happiness, and only one that was straight and sure."

They heard Mary Emma merrily engaged in conversation with Egbert.

"We're going to be cousins, Eg, ain't we? Won't it be jolly! We'll come and visit you here or in New York, or wherever Gussie wants you to live."

"We!" said Egbert. "Oh, you mean yourself and Lord Lowestoft."

"No, I don't. I mean myself and the Great Undiscovered. He isn't going to be lord anybody. He's out West there. I'll find him. Just you wait."

"Oho," laughed Egbert; "you'll be engaged to Lowestoft inside of a week. I'll make you a bet you will."

"How much?" said Mary Emma, holding out her hand.

"Well, say twenty pounds—a hundred dollars."

"Agreed." Then she tossed her head and looked at him, pityingly. "I hate to take your money, for I'm betting on a certainty."



HE WAS STONE-BROKE

"I AM building," the pensive maiden said,
"A castle in the air."

"And what is the corner-stone?" he asked.
She answered: "A solitaire."



A MAN with an opinion of his own is apt to be like a woman with a new hat—he wants everybody to know about it.

MOONRISE OVER EGYPT

SERENE and still thy stately splendor shows
 Adown the desert's waste unto mine eyes;
 A subtle solace to my sorrow's sighs,
 These blessed beams that bid my heart repose.
 Fair moon, a perfect beauty ever shows
 Within thy gentle glamour, ever lies
 The dearest charm that decks the sunless skies;
 Nor earth nor heaven a boon more lovely knows.

O moon, whose lambent sway so graces night,
 O golden, golden orb of holy light,
 I know thy truth, despite my living breath;
 Yes, thou art dead; beyond the toil and strife
 Thy glory shines the lesson of all life—
 The joy supreme, the splendid peace of death.

MARVIN DANA.



FITS

“MY wife is very fond of poetry, and makes her fondness known even in household matters,” said Darley to McBride.
 “So?”
 “Yes; I bought a dachshund the other day, and she immediately named it Longfellow.”



HOW HE CAME BY THEM

SHE—Have you never tried to make friends?
 HE—Oh, yes; that is the reason I have so many enemies.



CONSIDERED HERSELF LUCKY

CHAPPIE—I'm to be married soon. Do you know the lucky girl?
 SHE—I know one of them.

BACK INTO THE FOLD

By Gelett Burgess

BACK into the fold, Dolly, back into the fold;
Break into society before you get too old!
You've drunk life to the dregs, Dolly, laughed and didn't care,
But now your nieces have begun a-doing up their hair!
If you really want to spare them all unnecessary shock,
Invite the Misses Grundy to your Friday four-o'clock!

Back into the fold, Dolly, back into the fold,
Now before you're withered and spiteful tales are told!
Now you've got your money, now that Will is dead,
Everybody will forget what everybody's said.
While your smile is charming, none will dare to mock;
Invite the Misses Grundy to your Friday four-o'clock!

Back into the fold, Dolly, back into the fold!
Teach your little nieces all the potency of gold;
Teach them how to pour, Dolly, teach them how to dance,
Skip the larks in Italy, skip the fun in France!
Chaperon them carefully, get a sober frock,
Invite the Misses Grundy to your Friday four-o'clock!

Back into the fold, Dolly, back into the fold,
Cram yourself with dignity, all that you can hold!
You never needed spurring, and you ran without a rein,
But you're a bit too old, Dolly, to set the pace again!
Where the gossips chatter, gather with the flock;
Invite the Misses Grundy to your Friday four-o'clock!

Back into the fold, Dolly, back into the fold!
Once you didn't care much, you were young and bold;
Now the slyest whisper finds a shrinking nerve—
Have you ever heard, Dolly, all that you deserve?
But now you're rich, the doors, Dolly, open to your knock;
Invite the Misses Grundy to your Friday four-o'clock!

Back into the fold, Dolly, back into the fold!
Places in society can be bought and sold;
You owe it to your nieces to be proper and severe,
They will not believe, Dolly, anything they hear.
The wildest privateer, Dolly, at last must seek the dock;
Invite the Misses Grundy to your Friday four o'clock!

IN THE CASCINE

THE dark Cascine skirts the sleeping tide,
 And breaks the passion of a burning sun;
 The Arno's amber waters creep and hide
 'Twixt pebbly beaches where their course is run.
 The butterflies hang perched like living flowers
 Upon the petals in the moving grass;
 The birds cry shrilly from their tree-top towers,
 And whirl and swoop and flutter as we pass.
 The hot, moist breath of purpling Apennines
 Blows wandering breezes through the thirsty noon;
 The soothing hush of Nature's anodynes
 Drowns the harsh fever of a languid June—
 She brings strange unguents in her open palm;
 Upon the wounded heart they drop their balm.

JULIEN GORDON.



A SURE INDICATION

"THE Johnsons are home again."
 "Did they have a good time?"
 "Oh, I haven't seen any of them yet."
 "How do you know they're back, then?"
 "Their maids' beaux left at eleven o'clock last night."



HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY

EMINENT TRAGEDIAN (*at dinner in his private car*)—Aw, conductor,
 just order the engineer to reduce speed for the next hour or so.
 CONDUCTOR—What for?
 "I want to eat more slowly."



THE CHICAGO WAY

MRS. WABASH—Are you related to her by marriage?
 MRS. LAKESIDE—Incidentally; she was the co-respondent in one of my
 divorce suits.

A DRAMA IN A DINING-ROOM

By Edgar Saltus

IN the multiple brilliancies of the dining-room I found myself at the left of the Duchess Sally. Ever since her girlhood I had known her. At Narragansett Pier, in the good old nights before the Casino was dreamed of, I had sat with her on verandas that were vibrant with osculations. That was some time ago. Her subsequent transatlantic triumphs and spectacular marriage to the Duc de Malakoff are now ancient and familiar history—so ancient even that I am dispensed from noting that Sally is no chicken. But though her youth has gone her heart is young. Hence, no doubt, in disregard of every canon of precedence, my place beside her. But then, as I have intimated, she never was ceremonious.

Across the glittering service, beyond the gold branches of the lustres, sat Monsieur de Malakoff. Between him and Sally there were, including myself, fourteen other people. Over the bisque I had taken them in. Barring a nuncio and an aunt of Sally—Mrs. Nicholas Manhattan—I knew none of them. Barring two others, the rest of the party interested me but mediocrally. Of these two one was a vision in white, a delicious apparition that suggested the *pays des songes*, a face infinitely delicate and of exceeding beauty. The other was a young man who looked as the musketeer Aramis might in modern dress. His features were chiseled. On his lip was a mustache that seemingly had been drawn with a crayon. His hair was black, slightly curled; his eyes were chocolate, and their lashes long as a girl's. I should have thought him too good-looking for a

man had it not been for his chin, which was resolute, and the expression of his mouth, which was as firm and as chill as steel. Next to him was the vision. They were talking inaudibly together.

The bisque had gone. The *maitre d'hôtel*, followed by *valets de pied*, was presenting sturgeon from the Volga. Turning to Sally I asked who the young man was.

"The Marquis de Parabole," she answered. "That is his wife, next to you." Sally would have said more, perhaps, but the nuncio was claiming her attention.

Already I had noticed my neighbor, a little, red-headed woman, who, in face and manner, suggested a bird—yet, perhaps, a bird of prey. In any event, a bird that, with beak and talons, knows how to defend its own. In the word or two that I had already exchanged with her I knew by her accent that she could not be French, or, for that matter, Anglo-Saxon.

Presently our earlier conversation was resumed. At some remark of mine she smiled. I have never forgotten that smile. It disclosed a front tooth filled with a diamond.

The effect was startling and at the same time evocative. I recalled that the arrangement was affectioned in certain sections of South America, and it occurred to me that the lady might be a Brazilian—a supposition that subsequent developments confirmed. Yet that which at the time intrigued me most was her relationship to the young musketeer. I could have sworn that she would never see forty again, and that he was

yet to see twenty-nine. It seemed to me that I must have misunderstood Sally. But a look, which, in a pause of our talk, she shot across the table, undeceived me. It was double-barreled and aimed point-blank at the musketeer and the vision. There was hatred in it. Had I not already likened the lady to a bird I should add that there was venom in it, too. Could a look kill, there would have been murder then and there. A moment and it had gone. Her beady eyes shifted to mine.

A filet of reindeer was being served. From beyond came the rich voice of Monsieur de Malakoff. He appeared to be philosophizing on the degree of decomposition that renders game most savorous. Meanwhile, in the constant replenishment of blond wines, conversation and the tone of it heightened. The young musketeer was still talking inaudibly with that vision, but otherwise the table was united. Topics were tossed like balls. Jests flared as pin-wheels do. Wit, or at least a passable imitation of it, became common property, until, in a ripple of laughter created by a suggestion only a trifle more *scabreux* than the last, Sally rose, and from the gaiety of the room we passed into others yet gayer.

It was not for the sake of gaiety that I was then in Paris. On the contrary, I was at work on a history of the young empresses of old Rome. For such labors there is nothing more serviceable than the Bibliothèque Nationale. Hence the sojourn.

The morning succeeding the dinner I went as usual to the library. The documents that I there obtained held certain stupefactions; but my surprise at what I read was exceeded by my surprise at what I saw. At a table beyond was the young musketeer. Fancy a panther in a conservatory! Yet there he sat, fronted by a pile of MSS., and as lost in them as presently I became in the Subura. When I emerged from that Whitechapel of the past, he saw me and smiled in recognition.

A few days later at the Café An-

glais, where, because of its proximity to the library, I was in the habit of lunching, we met again, and in meeting, joined tables. For a while conversation drifted impersonally, but presently the *moi* popped out.

"May I, without indiscretion," I asked, "inquire the nature of your distractions at the Bibliothèque?"

"Alchemy," he answered. "But," he added, with a smile in which there was amusement at my manifest surprise, "let me ask what are your distractions there."

"Nothing half so fascinating," I replied. "I am merely a writer."

"In that case," he retorted, "you are an alchemist, too. A wad of paper and an ounce of ink you transform into bank notes. The transmutation of metals is a process only a trifle more elaborate. Others have practiced it successfully, and what has been done may be repeated."

"No doubt," I answered; "but the age of miracles has gone."

"Has it?" he asked, with an air of great innocence. "That, really, I did not know. I fancied that it had come. I believe that could the people who lived in what you call the age of miracles return they would be far more astonished at contemporary wonders than we are at those of the past. *Tenez, monsieur*. Just across the river is the Église de Ste. Chose. Its construction must have cost a lot, yet it was built by a poor devil of a bookseller who emerged from grinding poverty into abnormal wealth—relatively speaking, that is, for in his time even the richest were none too well off. For that matter, they are none too well off now. It is in wealth alone that the world has not progressed. Kings to-day have to count the pennies. Budgets are out at elbows. France, the most opulent country in Europe, is obliged to consider penuriously the cost of an ironclad. In early times there was nothing of this. The kings that were built at will cities of enchanted dwellings, shimmering avenues and walls so wide that they were race-courses. The treasures that Alex-

ander looted provided him with coin to the value of fifteen billion francs, a sum tolerably large, and yet paltry beside the four hundred and twenty-five billion that is estimated to have been the value of the treasure heaped on the pile of Assurbanipal.

"Whence did wealth in such proportions come? Through what wizardry were the fairylands that existed then created? Obviously, there was a secret, and that secret has been lost. At the beginning of the present era the total amount of money in circulation was a hundred times inferior to that which in earlier days a single satrap possessed. Thereafter the world grew steadily poorer. It was not until after the discovery of the Americas that wealth began to look up. But what are the world's riches now in comparison to what they were? There was not only a secret, and a secret that has been lost, but that secret was the transmutation of metals. Its fading memories used to haunt the minds of men. The attempts of Caligula to regain them are historic. They hallucinated the Middle Ages. Geber's theory, that metals are compound bodies made up of mercury and sulphur in different proportions, fascinated every alchemist, even to Roger Bacon, for he, too, had crucibles, alembics and aludels at work. In Paracelsus the effort culminated. He demonstrated that there was an unknown element, a quintessence, which he called the *alcahest*, and which when recovered would do the trick. That quintessence, Flamel, the bookseller whom I mentioned, found. I was going over one of his manuscripts to-day. There, monsieur——"

For a moment he fumbled in his pocket. Then he drew out an envelope, which he handed me. On it were signs quite cabalistic and figures equally abstruse. Yet from it there emanated an odor of orris, and I could not but notice that it was addressed to the marquis at a club. It naturally occurred to me that in addition to the distractions that he admitted he probably had others

that he concealed. I am not censorious, and in view of the lady with the diamond tooth, I did not blame him in the least.

"There," he resumed, "are the component parts. I jotted them on that envelope," he interrupted himself to explain, "because it was the only bit of paper I had. But that is the formula."

With that he ran on into technical terms, which conveyed no meaning to me, and my attention wandered until arrested by an entirely intelligible mention of flesh and blood.

"Human?" I asked, with pardonable surprise.

"Yes," he answered, "that is best. But nowadays people have such prejudices. Yet there is the *alcahest*."

He paused, glanced at the envelope, from it to me, and then, with that grace of manner which only Latins have, apologized for the dissertation. "Anything theoretical is so tiresome," he added, in his winning way. "Yet if by chance the subject has the merit of interesting you, I should be glad if you would accompany me to my shop. My home," he continued, "is in the Avenue Marceau, but for this work I have a *maisonnette* in the Rue de la Pompe, which I fitted up expressly. There I could have the pleasure of showing you an experiment or two."

The stupefactions of the Subura claimed me still. I had counted on a long afternoon at the library. I was stupid enough to prefer the society of a dead empress to a living alchemist, and I thanked him. Whereupon, after paying our scores—scores that included strawberries at a franc apiece, which, I mind me now, were fully worth it—we got out into the sunshine and absinthe of the street, where, little dreaming in what dramatic circumstances I was to see him again, we parted.

The dead empress detained me in Paris until, ejected by the heat, I ran down to Etretat. There, at the Casino one noon when looking over the *Figaro*, I jumped as though a dog had bitten me. I

think anyone else might have done so, too. I had happened on the account—with which all the world has since been familiar—of the arrest of the Marquis de Parabole for murder.

On the esplanade without was the usual throng of people that gathers there during the hour that precedes the *déjeuner* and succeeds the dip. Among them was my old friend, Mrs. Manhattan. Thinking that I might furnish a fillip for her breakfast, I approached her.

I have sometimes thought that horrors appeal to women more than they do to men. I am often in error; I may have been then, yet, as I greeted this lady, it seemed to me that she was reveling in the revelations. It is true that she knew de Parabole, and acquaintance with people lends an admitted charm to anything that you may read about them. The worse it is the better you like it. Mrs. Manhattan was radiant. From the manner in which she spoke it seemed to me that nothing had pleased her more since the day the news reached her of Sally's engagement. I presumed to say as much, but she turned on me quite viciously.

"When a man kills his wife—" she began.

"His wife!" I exclaimed. "The *Figaro* did not say that."

"Bother the *Figaro*! It was his wife he killed. First he took her money, now he takes her life. If a man marries a Hottentot, then, Hottentot though she be, he ought to treat her decently, instead of which, after making her life a curse, he boils her up in a cauldron."

"Nonsense!" I threw in. "Besides, she isn't a Hottentot; she is a Brazilian."

"It is quite the same to me," Mrs. Manhattan, with superb indifference to ethnology, threw back. "He ought to be drawn and quartered. In my presence once he contradicted her flatly."

"Yes, that is just it," I managed to remark. "A woman will act on a man's nerves day in, day out, and

if, under constant fire, his nerves once give way and he calls his soul his own, he is nothing more or less than a brute."

"That's right," Mrs. Manhattan, with great irony, retorted; that's right. Justify him entirely. A man who murders his wife ought to be decorated. I know all that. I have heard it before. But only in France. And since in France you feel as Frenchmen do, I can't see why you don't run up and congratulate him."

Abashed and hushed, I had no recourse but to retreat. When, a few weeks later, I reached Paris, the preliminary examination had been concluded and the trial was announced. At that trial I determined to be present. Others did, too. So many, in fact, that but a fraction got in. But journalism is a sesame. As a member of the press I succeeded where Members of Parliament failed. I not only succeeded in getting in, I succeeded in getting a seat—a stall, rather. In the interrogatory that ensued a drama unrolled.

For setting, there were bare white walls, which a crucifix dominated. Fronting the audience was the tribunal. There, robed in red, the president and the assessors sat. Before them was a display of exhibits. To the left was the jury. In the dock, to the right, was the prisoner. As I seated myself he looked over at me and smiled, very much as he had in the library. He seemed as out of place in the Cour d'Assises as he had in the Bibliothèque Nationale. There he had suggested a panther in a conservatory, here a prince in the galleys; and I could not but marvel at the intricacies of the mystery we call life, which had led him from one to the other.

These meditations a *greffier* interrupted. The indictment was being read. At its conclusion the president turned to the prisoner.

"What have you to say, de Parabole?"

"That you wish my head, monsieur," the marquis answered, as he

rose. "I regret to be unwilling to oblige you with it."

The president pursed his lips and surveyed the court. "That is natural," he answered at last. "But for the moment it is beside the issue. Where were you on the night of the 12th of July?"

"That question I have already refused to answer."

The president pursed his lips again. He reminded me of nothing so much as a salamander. His mouth had the same width and his chin the same recession.

"Yes, I am aware of it," he continued. "You left the *juge d'instruction* to infer that you were occupied with some gallant adventure. For the moment we will let that go, too. Meanwhile you may tell me the object of your separate establishment in the Rue de la Pompe."

"Experimental researches."

"That, I am also aware, is your defense. It is not unadroit. It explains the presence there of an arsenal of chemicals. But it does not explain the presence of other things concerning which you shall have an opportunity of enlightening the jury. You have frequently quarreled with the deceased."

"If," the marquis answered, "you refer to Madame de Parabole, I do not know that she is dead. Nor," he added, with entire courtesy, "do you."

"I at least know that she is not to be found. The prosecution has searched for her everywhere. But the search was not otherwise fruitless. It has been discovered that at the time of your marriage you had nothing but your title. Your wife, previously a widow, was the daughter of a rich Brazilian. Her property you dissipated. That accomplished, you again had nothing but your title. With a view to bartering it anew you devise an elaborate scheme. You give out that you are an alchemist. You fit up a laboratory. You stock it with chemicals. On the evening of July 12th you lure your wife there. She drives up to the door in her car-

riage, dismisses it, and enters the house. She has never been seen since that moment. But later that evening a passer hears a scream. At midnight another passer notices a reflection of flame. What were you doing at that hour?"

"I have forgotten."

"Very good. I will tell you. You were destroying the remains of your wife whom you had murdered. But you did not destroy them entirely. In a cauldron in that den of yours were discovered, together with bits of bone, some thick, brown ooze in which were traces of caustic soda and caustic potash. Experts will demonstrate that by means of these chemicals a human body can be converted into just such ooze. Do you deny it?"

"On the contrary, it is quite true. Only in this instance it happens that the ooze was the residue of the body of a gorilla which I had obtained from the Jardin d'Acclimatation."

"That defense you advanced before the *juge d'instruction*. Inquiries made of the management show that you did acquire a gorilla. But it was only a part of this plot of yours. It was only that, in case of misadventure, you might have a ready answer. In any event, the gorilla obtained by you did not, I suppose, have a tooth filled with a diamond. A tooth set with a diamond was found in that ooze. A tooth filled with a diamond was the peculiar characteristic of the deceased. Here it is. I invite you to be seated."

"Silence!"

The court-room, suddenly murmurous with indignation, hummed like a wasp's nest. I could see men gesticulating. A woman fainted.

"Silence!" a crier repeated.

The prisoner seemed unmoved. A fat man approached and addressed him. I heard someone say that it was Maître Dupin, his advocate.

The president, who had reminded me of a salamander, looked now like a wolf; but a wolf that has fed. Turning to a *huissier*, he ordered him to call the first witness, and presently the coachman who, on the night of the 12th of July, had driven the mar-

quise to the Rue de la Pompe was testifying to that effect. He was succeeded by other witnesses—by agents and experts, who corroborated the president's arraignment. When they had gone the *avocat général* addressed the jury, summing up the evidence, deducing from it the guilt of the accused, clearly, logically, without oratory or literature.

"Any question of mitigating circumstances," he concluded, "is out of place in a case such as this. Yet if your conscience hesitates, it is your duty to acquit that man. But if you are absolutely convinced that he is an assassin, it is equally your duty to declare him guilty. I have no wish to say that the blood of his victim cries for vengeance. Of vengeance I know nothing. What I demand of you is justice."

"Silence!" the crier repeated.

Again the room was humming like a wasp's nest. But this time it was murmurous with applause. In the subsidence of that applause the fat man stood up. In his hand he held a paper, at which he glanced. Then he bowed, first to the bench, afterward to the jury.

"Gentlemen," he began, "it had been my intention when I reached here this morning to open my address to you with a citation, not from the code, but from a novel. In the 'Affaire Lerouge,' the most famous story of the famous Gaboriau, a man is arrested for murder. Against him are advanced proofs quite as convincing as those that have been brought against Monsieur de Parabole. But the magistrate having asked him where he was during the night of the crime, and he having refused to reply, the magistrate cried: 'Release him; he has no alibi, he is innocent.' Gentlemen, after reminding you of that subtle and, as it was subsequently shown, correct deduction, it had been my intention to demonstrate to you that the essence of crime is the motive, and that here none has been shown. It had also been my intention to display to you my client in his true light, a young

seigneur who, through unfortunate speculations at the Bourse, had lost, not merely his wife's fortune, but his own, and who was seeking to recover both through the transmutation of metals. Whether such transmutation be possible, whether or not—as Monsieur de Parabole has confided to me—he was on the point of recovering that solvent which is alleged to have existed, I am not competent to affirm. But on entering here this morning I did feel competent to use the exhibits that are piled on this table, and to show from them that whether or not the pursuits of Monsieur de Parabole were chimerical, at least they were not criminal. Among those exhibits but one object embarrassed me. That object is the diamond tooth. Even with my client's aid and my best endeavors I felt unable to explain its presence by any theory of coincidences that would have been satisfactory, but it had been my intention to leave it to you to decide whether a man should lose his head because someone else had lost a tooth. These demonstrations that I was prepared to set before you I am now dispensed from elaborating. I let them go, vaguely outlined as they are, for, gentlemen, the Marquise de Parabole is dead indeed, only she did not die in the Rue de la Pompe, she did not die on the 12th of July. She died the day before yesterday in Rio de Janeiro!"

"Silence in this court!" It was the president who was commanding quiet now. There was no longer a murmur, there was a tumult, in which the whole vast room had joined.

"Silence!" he commanded again. Then, turning to Maître Dupin, "What evidence," he asked, "have you in support of this statement?"

"A cablegram brought to me a half-hour ago, which I shall have the honor of submitting to you. Dated Rio, it is addressed to Dr. Rosa e Silva, the Brazilian consul here, and it states that Madame de Parabole died there, as I have represented, the day before yesterday, twenty-four hours after landing. I am aware, *monsieur le*

président, that it will have to be verified, but meanwhile I ask that the trial be adjourned."

Mopping his fat face, Maître Dupin bowed and sat down. I could have embraced him. I wanted to tell him so. But the *avocat général* was speaking now.

"The obvious good faith and high professional standing of the gentleman for the defense relieve me," he was saying, "from opposing his suggestion. Yet I must admit——"

What he was about to admit no one heeded. The *salle* was again in commotion. Everybody was talking at once. At the moment I could not see the prisoner. Maître Dupin was bending over him, and presently, through the tumult, circulating above and accentuating it, mounted the shrill call of the crier. Then I became conscious that I had assisted at a *coup de théâtre* which, for sheer poignancy, I had never seen equaled on the stage, and, precisely as from a play, I found myself drifting out with the crowd to the street.

It was months later, in the multiple brilliancies of the Malakoff dining-room, that the last act was given. Meanwhile I had gone to New York and returned. It was June again; and again, in defiance of every canon of precedence, I was seated at Sally's left. Across the table was the young musketeer, and across the table, too, was the delicious vision. On the other side of me was Mrs. Manhattan. From beyond, through the gold branches of the lustres, came the rich voice of the duke. He was philosophizing, as a great noble may, on the superiority of white truffles over black. In appreciating the fine discrimination I could not but reflect that his ancestor, the Napoleonic hero, who had won a duchy with a sword, would have appreciated it still more. These reflections Mrs. Manhattan interrupted.

"There is a subject for you. Why not write it up?"

"Monsieur de Malakoff's physiology of taste?" I asked.

"No; Monsieur de Parabole's physiology of marriage. You know, do you not, that he is engaged to——" and Mrs. Manhattan, with a quiver of the eyelids, indicated the delicious vision. "That is what killed the Hottentot. The poor old thing knew what was going on. A man may betray the woman who loves him, but never can he deceive her."

"Quite so," I answered; "and it was by way of love-token, I suppose, that she extracted that ornament from her mouth and left it where the police could make the worst of it. When I read in the paper that this lady had first planted her tooth and then vanished in order that he might be guillotined for her murder, mentally I took off my hat to the medievalism of her imagination. But though I took off my hat, were I de Parabole I would have taken her life had she not conveniently died in the interim."

"Oh, yes," Mrs. Manhattan returned, with a suggestion of sarcasm, which at the moment escaped me. "You, of course, would have done wonders."

"But I must ask him," I continued, "whether or not he is still in search of the alcahest."

"The what? The alcahest? What is that?"

"A synonym for happiness," I explained. Then after looking at some blond wine that a footman was serving I looked over at the delicious vision.

"And happiness, to my thinking," I added, "consists, if it consists in anything, in the kiss of one girl."

But my views were unnoticed. Sally was rising, and from the brilliancies of the dining-room we passed to other rooms yet more brilliant.



A NEGLECTED TRIBUTE

I'VE written them reams of love verses—
 Lucile, and Susanne, and the rest;
 All the fancies a rhymers rehearses
 To their names have been tagged and addressed;
 But a flame newly kindles with zest
 My Muse, till she's tardily fired
 With a feeling, till now never guessed—
 For the maiden I never admired!

Her picture my heart never nurses,
 My feelings she cannot molest,
 I am safe from attack, and my purse is
 Never opened to make her my guest;
 Unthrilled by her slightest behest,
 Uncharmed by the way she's attired,
 There is peace in my soul, I attest,
 For the maiden I never admired.

To think of her sanely disperses
 All the love-lore I've learned to detest;
 Glum thoughts that were blacker than hearses,
 Dim moonings of sad, mad unrest;
 Of all, she has treated me best,
 And to thanks I'm profoundly inspired—
 Thanks, too, that I'm still unimpressed
 By this maiden I never admired.

L'ENVOI

Should I soften, please deem it a jest,
 Not a lapse into love undesired;
 'Twill be gratitude that I protest,
 Oh, maiden I never desired!

J. H. GREENE.



PARKER—Wonder if I would have any luck if I proposed to Miss Peppers?
 BATCHLEY—Depends on what you call luck.

COURTSHIP BY CORRESPONDENCE

By Hilda C. Hammond-Spencer

I SUPPOSE the correct way of introducing myself to you is to tell you that my name is Maud Evelyn Skeggs, that I'm just fifteen years old, and that everybody says I'm a very plain edition of the *mater*. I think it's very hard on a girl to have a mother who sets up for being a beauty; she doesn't start with a fair chance, it seems to me, and I speak from experience. There has never been any fear of my being vain about my personal appearance—my family take good care of that; they say I have the *mater's* few bad points, with several original ones of my own added on, without any of her good ones. One's school friends, too, are not addicted to flattery. But there! I don't care, for I've had an experience, a most thrilling experience—one that would simply make their hair turn gray with envy if they only knew about it, thought it certainly ended rather badly.

This experience is what I am going to tell you about; other people write theirs, so why should I keep my light hidden under a bushel?

First of all, I must explain that I have a sister who, at the time of which I am writing, was fearfully interested in the stage and in every actor and actress who ever trod the boards. She was engaged to an actor; perhaps that was why. At any rate, she was perfectly crazy on the subject and used always to be talking to me about it, but in such an aggravatingly superior way.

"Of course you can't quite understand it yet, Maud, but if you had seen Brown Gray in the part, you might know what I mean."

She made ever so many speeches of

that sort. Then she would quote her beloved Charlie to me until I really couldn't stand it any longer, and fled from the room.

Edith and Charlie were very happy, and I must say that he was a very good sort and a nice person for one's sister to be engaged to, for when he wasn't on tour and was staying with us, he used often to buy me sweets and things. "To propitiate the disapproving one!" he would say to Edith, laughing. I never quite understood what he meant, but I understood the sweets, and that was the chief thing.

One evening it happened that we went to the theatre to see "Hamlet," at least, that was what we meant to see, but it turned out that Edith had made a mistake about the night, and what we really saw was "Romeo and Juliet." The *mater* was rather annoyed about it, for you see I was only being taken because "Hamlet" was the play we were doing at school that term, and the *mater* had made up her mind that I was to come out strong in the "exam." But Charlie, who was with us, behaved like a brick, and told her that we would most probably have "Romeo and Juliet" next term, and that I would have a good start. The *mater* seemed surprised, but cheered up on the strength of it.

I enjoyed the play immensely; the man who played *Romeo* was so good-looking, and acted splendidly. His name was Mr. Lancelot Trevellyan, and I thought it such a lovely name. He had big blue eyes and black hair, and I felt thrilled whenever he came on the stage. You know that part

where *Juliet* drugs herself? Well, it was in that part that I made up my mind; I determined to write to dear Lancelot Trevellyan next day for his autograph. The others wondered why I was so quiet on the way home—ah! they little knew that I had fallen in love!

When I went up to my room that night I made a rough copy of the letter. I had better tell you that I am considered rather good at letter- and essay-writing, so I did not find it very hard; at least, it was easy enough to think of things to say—it was leaving out things I would have liked to say, but knew I must not, that I found difficult. Of course, I wanted to write a maidenly letter, so I had simply to bottle myself up and write as if I were asking for the character of a cook, or something of that kind. Finding another name for myself, too, rather worried me; I felt that I couldn't use the unromantic name of Skeggs; it always reminds me of beer and cheese—I don't quite know why. After thinking for ages, I decided to sign myself "Gwendoline Baden Montmorency," for I admire General Baden-Powell very much, and I thought I should like to pay him a compliment, even though he would never know.

When I had finished the rough copy I wrote it out properly; my handwriting isn't very neat, but at any rate, it's not childish. The letter read rather well:

DEAR MR. TREVELLYAN: Last night I had the pleasure of seeing you as *Romeo*, and I admired your acting immensely. You were simply splendid—we all thought so. (The *mater* is very particular, so I knew he should be pleased at hearing this.) But I am not writing to pay you compliments; I want to ask you a very great favor. Will you send me your autograph? You can't think how much I would value it. I have never seen anyone act half so well as you do, and if you will be so kind as to grant my request and send it to me, you will earn the everlasting gratitude of

Yours sincerely,

GWENDOLINE BADEN MONTMORENCY.

I must say that I thought the bit

about the compliments rather neatly put; it was quite an inspiration.

The next day was Sunday, so I posted the letter on my way to church, but I was very worried about getting the answer—if he did answer—for unless I could manage to meet the postman I was done for. Fate favored me, and I met him both times on Monday, before breakfast and after lunch, on my way to school, but there was no letter for me. I forgot to tell you that I found his address through *The Stage*, a paper that Edith gets regularly every week. It has one column, called "On Tour," which tells you where most of the companies are going. If it had not been for this I don't know what I should have done.

On Tuesday I met the postman again—it was our half-term holiday—and when I looked over the budget for our house, and found one addressed to me—I mean to Miss G. B. M.—I nearly went mad with excitement. I took all the letters into the house, so that the postman's suspicions should not be roused; then flew with my letter up to my room and locked the door. There was no real need for me to do this, for no one was at all likely to disturb me, but it seemed the proper thing to do, and so I did it. Then I tore open the letter and read it through, so hurriedly that I didn't half take it in, and had to read it all over again. I suppose I had better copy it out for you to see.

DEAR MISS MONTMORENCY:

Many thanks for your letter. I hardly merit your appreciation, I am afraid, but send my autograph (not worth much as yet!) as you request. I am glad to think that someone admires my acting, more especially a lady, as I know ladies are hard to please. I feel sure that I could succeed, but in our profession it requires either money or influence; I have neither, so take what I can get. I am ambitious—that is something.

I wish I could meet you; perhaps, if you care to have me, I may do so some day. At any rate, I shall always be pleased to hear from you, and I hope you will let me know if at any time I

happen to be playing in a town where you are. You have roused my curiosity—womanish, I know, but I can't help it!—will you think me rude if I ask you to send me your photograph? I am at the Theatre Royal, Benton, next week, and at this town until then.

Hoping that this letter will not bore you, believe me

Yours sincerely,
LANCELOT TREVELLYAN.

Of course I was fearfully excited when I read this, for I had not hoped for anything half so nice; I had expected just an autograph, and that was all, so I was overjoyed. I longed to show it to Edith, but I knew she would tell Charlie, and that then they would chaff me till my life wouldn't be worth living. That's the worst of having engaged sisters; they can't keep anything from the men they are engaged to; so I had to give up the idea, though I would have liked to unburden my mind, and I knew that to be strictly correct I should have had a confidant of some sort—girls in novels always do. However, I consoled myself by thinking that these girls generally have the whole show given away by the people they have trusted with their secret, and I made up my mind to run my little affair "all on my own." I didn't answer dear Lancelot's letter there and then, as I thought it would look too keen; so I bottled myself up again and waited for two whole days. Then I thought I might write, and also that I might be a little more friendly than I had been before. It took me nearly two hours to compose my letter, but it was worth it. Somehow or other my imagination ran away with me; I thought it would be great fun to invent a romantic little story for his benefit. So this is what I wrote:

DEAR MR. TREVELLYAN:

Thank you so very much for your letter and the autograph; you say the latter is not worth much as yet—well, I don't agree.

What a shame it is that money and influence have so much to do with getting on in your profession! I call it too bad. You are quite right to be ambitious; I should be, in your place. How very

kind of you to wish to meet me; I echo the wish. I wonder if we shall ever come across each other. I am not quite sure how long I shall be staying here, as my uncle, who is also my guardian, is at the front. I wish the war were over, for I want him to come back and take me away from this dull place.

No, I don't think you at all rude in asking for a photograph, and I would send you one with pleasure if I had one—which I haven't. My last photograph was taken when I was ten years old; you would hardly care for one of those.

Of course your letter did not bore me—I should think not! far from it! It was most interesting, and I thought it very nice of you to bother to write such a long one.

Wishing you every possible success in your career, I remain

Yours sincerely,
GWENDOLINE BADEN MONTMORENCY.

I thought, you see, that he might jump to the conclusion that General Baden-Powell was my uncle, and that I had been named after him. I tried to write as grown-up a letter as I could, and as he sent me back a long answer, I concluded that it met with his approval. Yes, after this a regular correspondence started between us. It began by his saying he wished that I would be his friend, and would go on writing to him, as he felt we had lots of things in common, or words to that effect, and any amount more of the same sort. Naturally I felt rather flattered, and being agog for a new experience, one, too, that seemed likely to be exciting, I jumped at the idea. Of course, it was very wrong and deceitful and all the rest of it, but I did.

It was always most agitating when his letters came, and there was generally an awful rush to meet the postman, but somehow I always managed it. I wonder now that my hair did not turn white as the driven snow, as the expression is. On the whole, I am glad it didn't, for as I have auburn hair—Tom, my young brother, and the girls call it carrotty, but that's only their ignorance—and rather pale eyes with eyelashes to match, I don't think I would look any nicer with white hair than I

do now. But this is a digression—*revenons à nos moutons*, as that wretched Bué has it in his hateful book of French idioms. Talking of idioms reminds me that I used to think of Lancelot so much—all day long, in fact—that I never did so badly before in the “exams” as I did that term; the *mater* was very seriously annoyed about it.

I won't copy any more letters out, for at first they were just ordinary friendly ones, and would probably bore you; but life became very thrilling for me. Lancelot said he always looked forward so much to hearing from me that he thought I must be a “most fresh and delightful girl,” and a “very interesting woman,” and lots of other nice things. I never told him my age, and he seemed to take it for granted that I was about twenty-one or two.

When I had been writing to him for some time he asked if he might drop the “Miss Montmorency” and call me “Gwen;” he also asked me to call him “Lancelot.” Gradually his letters began to get more and more affectionate, until—what do you think happened?—he said he had fallen in love with me through our correspondence, and wanted to know if I would be engaged to him!

I think I must copy that letter out for you to see. I can't tell you what I felt like when I got it. To think that I, Maud Evelyn Skeggs, only fifteen years old, had got a real proposal—such a romantic one, too, and from such an interesting, dear, handsome man! I quite pitied Edith, for Charlie seemed so insignificant compared to my Lancelot. Here's the letter:

MY DEAREST GWEN:

I was so glad to get your last dear letter. You can't think how much I always look forward to hearing from you. What would happen to me now if you left off writing, heaven only knows! You are so different from other girls; you seem so quaint, so original. I wish I were a rich man, but alas! I am not making much money. My salary is fairly good, as far as salaries go in our business, but I am afraid it would seem nothing less than beggary to you, for I

can see that you have been used to a comfortable home and to all sorts of luxuries. You say that you want to go on the stage—well, candidly, I'm afraid you couldn't stand the life; you would never be able to rough it round the country; you don't know what that means; it's not all beer and skittles, I can tell you. I don't want you to idealize the life. Are you still anxious to try it? If so—well, Gwen, I want to tell you something. You have made me love you very, very dearly now by your letters. Do you care at all for me in return? Will you be engaged to me, and promise to marry me next year? If so, you will make me very happy, dearest. I will take good care of you, and will teach you to act; a clever woman like yourself would not take long to learn the ins-and-outs of our profession. You say I may be disappointed in you when I see you, but I know I shall not.

Maybourne is a wretched town, smoky and filthy, but the country all round is very pretty. How I wish you were with me! We would go for such long, delightful walks together. Gwen, dear, no man can do more than I am doing. I love you! Will you marry me, as I ask, in a year's time? Now, think well before you reply to my letter, for I mean it all, on my soul I do!

With all my love—I may say that, mayn't I?—

Yours always,

LANCELOT.

I won't show you my answer, for you might think it rather silly. You see, I was very excited and flurried about it. To think of my being engaged! The idea made me smile, but it felt lovely; its being secret was nice, too, and added to the romance. I felt so grown-up, and could quite enter into Edith's feelings about her adored Charlie.

At last, one lovely day in August, when I had been engaged for about two months, Lancelot wrote to tell me that he had a week's holiday, and was coming to spend it at Silvermouth, the little seaside place where we lived. Imagine my feelings! I could think of nothing but our meeting. I was very much bothered, though, about the length of my frocks; the *mater* was so aggravating about them. I wanted to have them

lengthened — goodness knows that they were short enough, and old enough, too—but the *mater* and Edith—I owe her one for that, and won't forget it, either—said that they saw no reason for it; that I was only just fifteen, and short for my age. In fact, they altogether declined to listen to my views on the subject, and of course I could not tell them what a good reason I had, so they remained as they were. The trials of this life are many.

The eventful day dawned at length. I was to meet Lancelot at a particular spot on the sea-wall, a place where we ran no risk of being seen or disturbed; and somehow or other I got through breakfast without the family noticing how frantically excited I was. Our Summer holidays had begun, so I was allowed to do practically what I chose all day long.

Punctually as the town clock struck eleven I walked along the sea-wall to our place of meeting. Long before I reached the spot I could see a tall figure waiting there, dressed in navy blue, with a straw hat. This was how he had told me he would be dressed; I was to wear a white piqué coat and skirt (somewhat shrunk in the wash), with a pale blue tie and one of those white, floppy baby hats. In strict confidence, I may tell you that I looked really rather nice—for me; and I did so hope that Lancelot would not be disappointed. He was looking so intently over the wall that he did not notice me coming up behind him. Then, after waiting for a moment, wondering what I should do, I said in a low voice, for I felt rather shy:

“Lancelot!”

He gave a start, and turned round quickly.

“At last!” he cried. Then he began to stare at me, and the smile on his face died away.

“It's impossible — it can't be! What cruel trick has she played me?” he murmured, half to himself. Then he turned to me again, as if a sudden thought had occurred to him.

“Has Miss Montmorency sent you?

Is she ill? Have you a message? Why didn't she come herself, child?”

I could stand this no longer.

“She *has* come,” I cried. “Oh, Lancelot, why are you so horrid to me? Don't you see that I am Gwen?”

“You are Gwen!” Then the incredulous look on his face gave way to one of furious anger. “Then you mean to say that a little girl of your age, a child with frocks to her knees—you can't be more than thirteen or fourteen—that you've taken me in, made a fool of me like this? It's impossible that you can have done it alone; I suppose that you and one of your school friends have combined to make a laughing-stock of me; no doubt you thought it an excellent joke. Thank you! From this day forward kindly let all correspondence between us drop. Good morning, Miss Gwendoline Baden Montmorency!”

He raised his hat and walked away, and I stood staring stupidly after him, feeling an absolute idiot. Could this be Lancelot?—this detestable, cross, sarcastic man? Oh, after this I could never trust anyone again; I had been betrayed, jilted, just because I happened to be a few years younger than he had imagined I would be, and because I wore short frocks! What difference could these facts make to him?

I went home, and sitting in my room, thought sadly how true it was that men were deceivers ever.

I felt rather gloomy for the next few days; everything seemed so flat, including myself, for I had been so horribly crushed. But soon afterward Edith and Charlie were married, and I was her chief bridesmaid. The wedding was such fun that I forgot how badly my own love's young dream had ended, and enjoyed the festivities ever so much.

I am going to stay with Edith next week, and Charlie has promised to introduce me to some real London actors and actresses, and I am to be taken to lots of theatres and be given a lovely time altogether. But I have determined never to fall in love with

anyone again, least of all with an actor; in my opinion, they are not to be trusted. Like the scribes and Pharisees, they think more of the outside of the platter than the inside.

The only time when I think of my unfortunate affair is when I take down a bundle of letters—love-letters—tied carefully together with blue ribbon, which I am keeping as a

last memento of Mr. Lancelot Trevellyan.

P. S.—By the way, his hair wasn't black, after all; it was a sort of washed-out straw color, for I noticed it when he took off his hat. I do hate men with straw-colored hair, and he evidently had a very bad temper, so I don't think that I lost much after all! Do you?



VALENTINE TO SYLVIA

THE haw is shriveled on the brier,
The wilding apple shrunken small;
And yet the flower of my desire
It fades nor withers not at all.
When barren droop both bough and vine,
It's Sylvia, be my Valentine!

The birds are mute, no cadence breathes
Where copses once were golden-keyed;
And yet no spell of silence wreathes
About the crying of my need.
But ever, ever, masters mine,
It's Sylvia, be my Valentine!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



A SELFISH PLEA

CORA—And why should I think twice before I refuse you?
MERRITT—Because, my dear, a girl never thinks the same twice.



CURIOUS TO KNOW

THE BACHELOR—Why, I've just reached my prime.
SHE—What delayed you?



THE man who prides himself on calling things by their right names would often be indignant if called by his right name.

“WHEN WE ARE MARRIED”

By Justus Miles Forman

CHESTER came out on the wide covered porch of the hotel and looked about him with a critical eye. He wanted something specially comfortable to sit in. The huge and elaborate wicker affair that belonged to the Austrian widow sprawled insolently empty by the rail, and he let himself down into it with a little sigh of content and blinked out sleepily at the white glare of sunlight that quivered over the hotel grounds and the little village street beyond, and was reflected from the walls of the Hôtel Mont Rose across the way.

It was about two o'clock, and he had just come down from a combination breakfast and luncheon in his own room, a meal beginning with coffee and pajamas and ending with deviled kidneys and a completed toilette. This is not to say that he commonly rose at two o'clock, but to-day was an exception. He had come in the night before from a Monte Rosa ascent, which means a good thirteen or fourteen hours out and back from the Riffelhaus, and no loafing at that.

“If I've left my pipe up-stairs,” said he, bitterly, to the gaunt peak of the Matterhorn, “I'll be— No, by Jove, here it is, after all,” and he slid its gnawed stem lovingly into the proper corner of his mouth and fell to regarding with mild curiosity a weird object that had drifted out from the door of the Hôtel Mont Rose and was being storm-tossed in the midst of a herd of passing goats.

The object escaped at last with a final flapping plunge, and crossing

the street, came up the gravel walk toward Chester's retreat. That gentleman breathed a sigh of relief. The object was only Lord Feltham, but he was very, very rowdy. He had on a quite indescribable shooting coat of venerable age, his breeches were unbuttoned at the knees so that they hung nearly to his gaunt ankles, his feet were partly in and partly out of a large pair of bedroom slippers, he had a deer-stalker cap over one eye, and from under its brim a pipe, more dissipated looking than Chester's own, insulted the blue heaven.

“I took you for some strange bird of prey, Feltham,” observed Mr. Chester, kindly. Lord Feltham looked troubled for a moment. He suspected an American joke, of which he had a pious horror.

“You mean my clothes?” he protested. “What's wrong with them? Everybody dresses like this after climbing; Zermatt isn't Piccadilly, man! But, my word, you do look beastly fit! You're not going away?”

“Not till we've done the Lyskamm,” said Chester. “Besides, I'm no such Solomon; I merely look like a human being, and not a— a——”

“Oh, say it!” cried Feltham. “Don't mind my feelings!”

“No, I won't,” said Chester, firmly. “I've thought of a good many things, but none of them seems to do you justice. Will you let me take a picture of you with my kodak? As for my clothes, since they seem to annoy you, I put them on to do honor to an unusual mental satisfaction that amounts almost to happiness. I feel frisky, Feltham, right-down larky!

I don't know why. I suppose I ought not, after yesterday's work. I think something is going to happen, something exciting——"

"You'll fall off the Lyskamm, no doubt," suggested Feltham, helpfully.

"Oh, I dare say, but you can't spoil my good humor. Even that awful orchestra, climbing into the kiosk out yonder at this moment, can't spoil it. I tell you something is going to happen," and he blew an argumentative wreath of smoke at the Matterhorn.

Feltham shook a pitying head. "Well, if that—that cursed band can't spoil your temper," he growled, "it can spoil mine. It has already spoiled it several times. I'm off. I say, if we're going to do the Lyskamm day after to-morrow, I'd best engage the guides. Do you want the Imbodens again?"

"Oh, I suppose so," agreed Chester. "I say," he called, after a moment. Feltham paused half-way to the little street and put a hand to his ear.

"Don't let the goats see you again; you frightened them," said Mr. Chester.

Lord Feltham regarded him fixedly for several moments, but not being strong at repartee, shook his head and flapped slowly across to his hotel.

The orchestra out in its little pavilion began to play "Follow On."

"Heavens!" cried Chester. "'The Belle of New York' under the very shadow of the Matterhorn! They'll be playing ragtime next!"

Nevertheless, he quite forgot that his pipe hung neglected in an idle hand, and it presently went out. He quite forgot that he was five thousand feet up among the snows of the Alps and four thousand miles from Broadway, and he hummed softly under his breath, with a queer little reminiscent smile:

"I find it very difficult, as I go through the city,
And try my best to hide the fact that I
am young and pretty."

His eyes closed on the Visp Valley, to open somewhere else, very far away.

"Oh, hang it!" he cried. "Stop that music! That died a long time ago, and—and other things died, too, Stop it! If you chaps play 'When We Are Married' I'll kill you." But he sang the old words softly under his breath, for all that, and his eyes closed on the Visp Valley, to open somewhere else—on the deck of an Atlantic steamer, of an evening, for choice a moonlit evening, with the two of them sitting on a pile of steamer rugs on the hurricane deck under the shelter of one of the life-boats; the two of them singing songs, not too loud, from "The Belle of New York:" "Follow On," and "When We Are Married," and "Teach Me How," and the rest. To be sure, "The Belle" was an old story even then. They had plenty of other things to sing from the pieces new in London that year: "Florodora," and "San Toy," and "The Rose of Persia," and "The Messenger Boy;" but even the "Moon" song and "The Shade of the Palms" had had a way of giving place to "When We Are Married," perhaps because *she* loved it best. At least, that was sufficient reason for Chester.

"Now look here," said he to himself, severely, opening his eyes once more on the Visp Valley, "all that is dead, you know, dead! For heaven's sake don't resurrect it! It had some trouble dying decently—curse that music!"

"When we are married!" sang the violins.

"'Why, what will you do?'" he hummed, promptly. It was quite unconscious and instinctive.

"I'll be as sweet as I can be to you," said the violins, and Chester's eyes shut again on the little valley of the Visp.

She used to wear a long gray raglan—greenish gray, he remembered. Heaven! was there any tiniest detail he didn't remember? And she wouldn't have a hat on, but pinned a

black dotted veil about her hair to hold it from the wind. What a voice she had! Probably it would never have been great; it hadn't the strength, but Madame Marchesi had said some very charming things about it in Paris. It had a thrill, a quiver in its golden contralto depths when it sang "I'll be as sweet as I can be to you," that made a man's heart jump even now, after this long time.

He remembered how he had used to chaff her about her accent, for she was from Texas, and not even Farmington, and afterward that French convent, had been able quite to eradicate the soft Texan drawl and the queer little idioms. How a poor chap had loved them!

"I will be tender and I will be true
When I am married, sweetheart, to
you!"

breathed the violins down in the little pavilion.

"Yes," said Chester, under his breath; "yes, you would have. My faith, you would have!" He took a long breath and lay back in the wicker chair, smiling gently.

"Now," said he, "if this were a story, a proper story, as I should write it—which heaven forbid—*she* would come stepping appropriately out of that omnibus, which has been to meet the afternoon train, with her—er—mother or somebody, and she would hear the band playing our old song—it would make her very sad and reminiscent. She would suddenly see me, and would blush and turn pale, and say, 'You! you! great heaven, *you!*' just like that. Then we would explain how our letters miscarried and how we lost track of each other, and—oh, well, we'd live happily ever after."

He smiled excitedly. "Yes, that's how I'd do it," he cried. "Though I'm afraid it would hardly be a proper story; it would be a comic opera. Still, I'd do it that way. What's the use in wishing if you don't wish for miracles! Of course, as a matter of fact, a very fat Russian with yellow hair and diamonds will get out of the

omnibus and drag three small dogs with her, and *she*—oh, well, she's in Texas, probably. God knows where!"

"When we are married," sang the violins. And then Chester's pipe dropped with a crash to the floor, scattering his knees with ashes and spilled tobacco, and a strange, great, feverish wave surged up in him and beat at his temples till he thought they must burst, and ebbed, leaving him cold and pale. A fit of trembling gripped his knees and hands.

"It's impossible, impossible!" clicked a strange voice somewhere in the back of his head. "I've gone to sleep; I'm dreaming! Oh, it's impossible!" He touched dry lips with a drier tongue. "It's impossible!" repeated the clicking voice.

She came up the steps. Some power, not within him, for there was no power there, only a great foolish weakness of trembling—some power not within him dragged him to his feet to confront her.

She did not cry "You! you! great heaven, *you!*" as she was to have done in the proper story. She only stopped half-way up the steps and looked into the man's face, and all the bright, healthy color in her cheeks ebbed slowly away, very slowly, till she was quite white, and her great eyes burned.

It would have been awkward, noticeable, but that the other occupants of the omnibus and the hotel porters were all busy with the luggage, so that no one had an opportunity to observe the two on the porch.

Then, all at once, the girl caught her breath sharply and tore her eyes with a visible effort from Chester's face, and advanced toward him, beaming very pleasantly. She said how perfectly fine it was to run on him away off up here. Was he climbing? And what an age it had been since they had met—and all the other usual things. She said them, if anything, a bit too hurriedly, breathlessly, and her hand in his was unsteady, but there was no one to notice. Then she called the man who was squab-

bling with the porters and introduced him to Chester.

"My husband, Mr. Walcott, Mr. Chester," she said. "Henry, Mr. Chester is an old, old friend. Isn't it jolly to find him up here!"

Chester pumped at Henry's limp hand, and disapproved of him altogether. He was very Southern in type—Chester fancied him a Texan. He had a long, thin, drooping nose, and little eyes that perpetually squinted. Indeed, the eyes were the worst feature of him, for on the whole he seemed a harmless sort, rather shrewd, no fool at least, but woefully out of place on the continent of Europe.

"He should have stopped at home on his ranch," thought Chester, with inward scorn. "He'd look better there, squabbling with his overseers and digging up good grazing country for oil. He could take an occasional trip by way of excitement to Chicago and sell his cattle—look at his clothes!" All of which was very nasty of Chester, even if the clothes were beyond endurance.

The hotel secretary, hovering about the little group like an anxious hen, managed finally to bear the newcomers off up-stairs to look at rooms, and Chester dropped again into the big chair of the Austrian widow and tried to think. The thinking resolved itself at the end of ten minutes into an ultimatum.

"I must go away," he said, decidedly. "I don't think I'm altogether a coward, but—well, I'm not a fool or a blackguard, either—I'll go away to-morrow."

Then a heavy step approached from the hallway.

"I reckon this is right high hereabouts," said the gentleman from Texas. Chester looked up with no great pleasure. The newcomer had left behind him his queer topcoat, but had evidently postponed removing the stains of travel. He had a crescent of soot on one gaunt cheek-bone and sundry decorations of the same on his nose.

"I don't cotton to altitoods," said

he, seating himself on the veranda rail. "Give me flat country, grass, and plenty of it, with a bunch of cattle or two, just to look homelike. Now all this here snow and mountains and things 'ud turn me daffy in a week. It ain't natural. It's too much like pictures. Course, m' wife, she likes it. She's used to it."

"You are—er—from Texas, I take it?" suggested Chester, wishing the man would go away.

"Why, sure," said the Southerner. "Lived there for twenty years raising horses and cattle. I was sort of head confidential man to m' wife's father till he died. That's how she and me happened to make it up. Texas is the place! Not but this country has points," he hastened to add. "But it ain't the real thing, somehow; seems like it was all dressed up to sell, like a store window. The best thing is the women. Say—" he leaned nearer with a confidentially lowered voice—"did you happen to cast an eye on that yellow-haired woman that come in our 'bus from the train?"

"I did," said Mr. Chester. "I have cast an eye on her before, in Paris. Most people have."

"Eggzactly!" cried the Texan, slapping a delighted knee. "That's where I seen her first, Paris, in a joint called Maxim's. Ever heard of it?" Chester nodded. "A man that I run into at the hotel steered me there one night after m' wife had gone to bed. This yellow-haired woman, she was there with a spindly little chap of a Frenchman. Say, she was a stunner in a low-neck dress, with a whole raft of diamonds slung about promiscuous! Now that's the kind of woman I like to see. I don't take no stock in these quiet, prim kind. I like 'em to show their style far's you can see 'em, plenty of color and gait. She's that sort."

"She is!" agreed Mr. Chester, with conviction. "You can tell her style just as far as you can see her."

"O' course," said Henry, deprecatingly, "being a married man I can't take no more than a passing interest in such-like women, leastwise not while m' wife's round. Have to leave

gallivanting to young fellows like you. Still, that's the kind of women I cotton to. She's a great shower. There's times," he said, after a pause, gazing reflectively out over the valley, "there's times when it appears to me like a man ought to leave his wife home when he goes traveling!" He rose with a protesting sigh and stretched his long arms over his head.

"Well, I reckon I'll have to wash up a mite. See you later on. Here comes m' wife. She must have been prinking!"

Chester turned with a breath of relief. He did not find Henry in the least entertaining.

"Good Lord!" he muttered, under his breath. "Maisie married to that! What in heaven's name could the girl have been thinking of?"

Mrs. Walcott came over to the place her husband had left and perched herself on the rail, refusing the widow's chair Chester offered her. She had put on something cool and Summer-like, pink and white and fluffy, with unexpected bits of green here and there. She leaned her head against a pillar of the porch and turned her eyes out toward the great rocky spike of the Matterhorn, that rose grandly from its fields of snow to the westward. The man noted that she looked tired about the eyes. Faint circles showed there when her face was in profile. She seemed older than the past two years would warrant.

"Did you hear what the band was playing when we arrived, Ted?" she asked, presently.

"Yes," said Chester; "yes, I heard." He thought to tell her about the little story he had made, but shook his head and stopped. "It's two years," said he. Then, "Are you happy, Maisie? Cheeky of me to ask, isn't it? But, are you happy?"

She smiled down on him, amusedly.

"Happy, Ted?" she queried. "Goodness, yes. What a funny thing to ask! Don't I look happy? Oh, we're tremendously pleased with each other, Henry and I, quite disgustingly contented. We've all the old-fashioned

virtues and none of the new-fashioned vices. You wouldn't like us a bit, we're so frightfully dull. And I'm growing fat on it, Teddy! I weigh a hundred and thirty-five pounds! Fancy! I'm huge, I tell you. Isn't it horrible?"

She turned her eyes back to the mountains with a little reminiscent smile. "Do you remember all our old songs? the 'San Toy' songs, 'I'm So Fond of a Little Bit of Fun,' and 'The Pretty Pagoda Rhoda Ran?' Oh, and 'The Messenger Boy,' one that you said must have been written about me?

"For the girls are so uncertain,
When they do a bit of flirtin';
But Maisie always gets right there!"

Teddy, Teddy, weren't they dear, those days!"

There was a queer little thrill in her voice and a warm color in the two cheeks.

Chester frowned up at her anxiously.

"If—if ever he shouldn't be good to you," he cried, "if ever he should treat you badly, I believe I'd wring his neck!"

But the woman only laughed. "Don't bother to keep in training, Ted," she advised. "You'll never have to wring his neck. He's far too good to me. He spoils me. My dear boy, you mustn't think that I'm unhappy just because I like to remember my kittenhood now and then." She turned her eyes again to the mountains, and sang, "When We Are Married," under her breath. Then presently her face clouded for an instant.

"The only thing I have to regret," she said, "is that we came abroad. I'm—I'm not sure that we wouldn't better have stopped at home. We were very cozy and contented there. I'm not sure that Europe is good for Henry. He seems a bit restless and—well, not quite himself. All this sort of thing is different from Texas, you know. I shall try to make him go home soon. Oh, Ted, you should see the dreadful yellow-haired creature who, I firmly believe, has fallen

in love with Henry! Isn't it quite too absurd? We've been running into her everywhere, and she has actually followed us here to Zermatt. If you should ask me, I believe Henry is secretly delighted with it all—quite set up. I chaffed him about his conquest the other day, and he grew really excited. Probably I shall have to get a divorce. Isn't it pitiful, Ted?"

"If you get a divorce, will you marry me?" asked Chester.

"Oh, goodness, yes!" she agreed, readily. "That would be quite too charming! But I sha'n't get it till after dinner. I'm going up to dress now. How cold it grows when the sun is out of the valley! Good-bye, Teddy, we'll see you at dinner. Don't forget that you're to marry me."

"There is a great beauty!" said the Austrian widow who sat next to Chester at table d'hôte. She spoke German with an amazing Southern accent.

"Which?" inquired Mr. Chester. "The one with the yellow hair?"

"*Herr Gott*, no! That one is French, and no Frenchwomen are ever great beauties, even when they are not respectable. No, the American one. A great beauty, but unhappy."

"Unhappy," criticized Chester. "Oh, I don't know; I've reasons for thinking she is quite the reverse."

"A great beauty, but unhappy," repeated the widow, ponderously. She had the irritating way, common to very big women of the majestic type, of never seeming to notice an interruption or dissent.

"Oh, well, as for that," said Chester, "do you know any women—I except young girls—who are happy?"

"Me," said the Austrian. "I am happy."

"But you are a widow," he protested.

"*Gott sey Dank!*" murmured the widow, with considerable feeling. Chester laughed.

"Somebody has been sitting in my porch chair," she said, presently, like

the bears in the fairy tale, "some man. He scattered tobacco all over the cushions, pig!"

Chester turned red. Like everyone else in the hotel he had a wholesome fear of the Amazon.

"Well—er—the fact is," said he, "I was sitting in it myself—it's such a jolly, comfortable sort of chair, you know. I'm sorry about the cushions."

The dragon's face softened. "*Ach*, you!" she said, gently. "That is different; you may spill all the tobacco you like in it. I thought it was some other man."

"Why, you dear old soul!" cried Chester, inwardly, "I wouldn't have believed it of you!" He had been quite sure that the woman detested him. "All the same," he went on, aloud, "you are mistaken about Mrs. Walcott. She's quite ridiculously happy and contented."

The widow shrugged her massive shoulders. "*So-o-o?* Watch her for a week!" said she.

Chester did watch her for the greater part of a week without observing anything to bear out the widow's assertion. They made several of the usual little excursions to the Gorner gorges and to the Schwarzsee, sometimes alone, sometimes with two or three others from the hotel. Henry stopped quietly at home; a rheumatic knee rendered anything beyond short strolls through the village and fields impossible for him, but he seemed to derive much good-humored pleasure from pottering about the tiny shops and laying in a quite impossible stock of the clocks, canes and paper-weights of carved wood with which Zermatt abounds. He was frankly grateful to Chester for looking after the amusement of "m' wife."

"You see, it's this way," he explained. "M' wife, she's some younger than me, and she likes to trot about poking her head into everything there is to see. Women is all that way," he sighed, reflectively. "Of course, she can't go round alone, and I ain't up to going her gait, so I take it right handsome of you to look after her."

"Oh, don't mention it," said Mr. Chester. "I—er—like it, you know. What's become of your friend with the yellow hair? You must not let Lord Feltham cut you out."

"Hey?" cried the Texan, looking up sharply. "Oh, her? I haven't seen her lately. The Englishman is welcome to her—I'm a married man."

Chester laughed and strolled up to the hotel porch, where the Austrian widow sat ponderously in her great chair and read, with seeming interest, a certain yellow-covered and highly realistic work by Monsieur Zola.

"My dear *baronne*," said Chester, "you are a most estimable woman in spite of your tastes in literature, but you're a bad judge of character. I've been keeping my eyes open, as you suggested, for nearly a week, and those two people are the most disgustingly contented creatures I ever saw. They annoy me. The only thing I have found worth watching is the affair between the yellow-haired person and Lord Feltham. It's the funniest thing I ever saw, simply immense! Feltham is so serious! Every day, about this time or a bit later, just when it's growing dusk, you can see them walking together over there in the meadows across the river, back of the hotel. I think they meet up near the bridge somewhere, for they're never together in the village. I dare say they think they won't be recognized at such a distance, but I know it's Feltham by his height and his walk. As for the—lady, as someone said the other day, you can tell her style as far as you can see her."

The widow looked up, frowning over her spectacles. "Go away!" she growled. "I am in the middle of a very interesting chapter. And as for you and your eyes," she added, uncompromisingly, "all men are fools." She marked the very interesting chapter with her finger and nodded a wise old head. "There is at present," said she, "one very clever woman in Zermatt—and one very unhappy one. As for the fools, I don't know how many men there are about. I could name three."

"Of course I'm a fool," said Chester, meekly. "You can't insult me by calling me that, but I wish you'd explain. I don't make it out. Ah, there goes the spooning party! Don't you see them over there, across the bridge in the field?—the lady with the yellow hair and Feltham!"

"Feltham?" inquired the widow.

"Why, Feltham, of course! Don't you suppose I'd know his stiff walk?"

"Try the spy-glass," murmured the widow, absently, turning a page.

Chester looked at her with a puzzled frown. "What do you—?" he began. Then he caught up the big spy-glass that always stood on the hotel porch, through which the loungers watched the climbing parties, and leveled it at the pair in the field across the Visp.

"Rather a low trick, isn't it?" he laughed.

After a moment he set the glass down quickly with a soft whistle.

"Feltham?" chuckled the widow, turning another page.

Chester came slowly back to the porch rail and sat down, frowning out at the mountains. "I fancy you're right," he said, after a time. "All men are fools. Of all the—ah, well, it's none of my affair!" He rose, laughing a little, and moved over to the doorway. "I mind," said he, from the shelter of the door, "a remark you made the other evening when I spoke of your widowhood. Oh, I say, I'm going to walk up to the Gorner Grat to-morrow morning with Mrs. Walcott. Don't you want to come along?" He smiled with some malice, for the widow would have walked across the street only after long and prayerful meditation.

There was a subdued growl from behind the yellow-covered novel, and Chester went indoors.

When he came down dressed for dinner, an hour later, the gentleman from Texas was just slipping quietly into the hotel. "Ah, Walcott," he said, cheerfully, "been for a walk?"

"No," said the Texan, with a great deal of nonchalance; "no, I ain't much for walking—just been hanging round

the shops out there. I bought a carved bear."

"Yes? You ought to walk more," suggested Mr. Chester; "do you good. Take a stroll over across the bridge and through the fields. It's pretty there."

The gentleman from Texas went on up-stairs, cursing to himself.

Chester strolled out on the porch. The person with the yellow hair was mounting the steps, and granted him a genial smile.

"*Bon soir, monsieur*," she said. "I have been for a promenade, *toute seule!*"

"*Toute seule?*" he inquired, sympathetically. Then he looked her in the eyes and smiled. "*Toute seule?*"

The woman laughed. "Well, very nearly," she qualified; "*à peu près.*"

Chester jerked his head toward the hall behind them. "*Ça fait de progrès?*" he asked, pleasantly. But the woman only laughed and went past him into the hall.

"How clever monsieur is!" she scoffed, from the doorway. "You couldn't have done it all yourself, though; someone must have helped you, no?"

"I suppose," frowned Mr. Chester, lighting a cigarette, "on strictly moral grounds I ought to warn Maisie that her darling is walking out with his inamorata from Paris. But I'm blest if I will! It's none of my affair. I dare say Henry is quite innocent—anyhow, he doesn't look the villain."

It was at a most unchristian hour in the gray of the following morning that Chester swallowed his coffee and then went shivering down-stairs, making, under his breath, very unpleasant remarks anent excursions that robbed one of his inalienable rights in the matter of sleep. Mrs. Walcott was already down and searching for her alpenstock in the rack by the door. She greeted Chester with a wan smile, and imitated his shiver.

"What's the matter?" he demanded, as they walked up the deserted little street toward the

bridge. "You don't seem right-down gay."

"Oh, nothing," said she. "I didn't sleep. Anyhow, it's not right-down gay to get up all alone at this horrible hour. It's so shivery. Look at that Théodule glacier! Did you ever in your life see anything so cold? By the way, how long is it going to take us to the Gorner Grat?"

"Oh, a matter of three hours; that is, if we loaf a bit. It's no good hurrying. We're coming back on the chu-chu cars, you know; only they aren't chu-chu, they're electric."

A walk up the Gorner Grat is in no sense mountain-climbing, inasmuch as there is a mule-path all the way, but it is very stiff exercise, nevertheless, and not calculated for persons weak in the knees or scant of breath. Chester and Mrs. Walcott loafed, not being out after records. They stopped at a *châlet* or two for milk—wherein they were foolish, in view of the walk before them; and they spent a quarter of an hour at the Riffel Hotel to watch, through the big glass on the veranda there, a climbing party on the Matterhorn. So it was nearly noon when they toiled up the last steep slope and stood panting on the summit of the Gorner Grat.

The indefatigable Seilers have had the bad taste—and business acumen—to erect a small hotel here, where one may obtain a meal, or even a bed for the night. It goes far toward ruining the most impressive view on the continent of Europe.

"I find," said Mr. Chester, in a tone of no great surprise, "that I have developed an appetite. Do you feel up to tough chicken and something unspeakable in the way of wine? The lunch will be pretty bad—I know that from experience—but one mustn't expect too much of a hotel that has to bring even the water it washes with on mule-back from Zermatt."

After a luncheon as bad as Chester had prophesied they spent a half-hour in front of the little house on the crest of the precipice overhanging the Gorner glacier, and Chester

pointed out the great chain of peaks that towered in a gigantic row from the Matterhorn on the right to the great snow-slopes of Monte Rosa.

There is an eastward prolongation of the Gorner Grat, a narrow, boulder-strewn tongue of rock pointing toward the Cima di Jazzi. Its south face is a ragged precipice, with the Gorner glacier wrinkling far below at the foot. To the north a snow-field drops swiftly away to meet the Trift glacier.

"Where does that funny little promontory thing lead to?" asked Mrs. Walcott.

"That?" said Chester. "Ah, that's the Hohthäligrat. It doesn't go anywhere in particular, just ends, out beyond at the Stockhorn. The Stockhorn is rather higher than we are here, and you can see the Findelen glacier and the peaks north of the Cima di Jazzi beautifully. The going's rather nasty, though—all rocks."

"Oh, I want to go!" she cried. "It doesn't look hard, and I'm not a bit tired. If it grows too bad, we can come back. What's nasty about it?"

"Well," he protested, "those paving-stones, as they look from here, are very respectable boulders. We'd better not try it; it's uncommonly hard work, and not over-safe."

"That settles the question," declared Mrs. Walcott, with some firmness; "I am going! You may stop here if you're afraid. I'd rather like to show you that mule-paths aren't my limit."

Chester threw away his cigarette with a sigh. "Of course, when I warned you against it," he said, plaintively, "I might have known I was making it attractive. As a matter of fact, it isn't at all worth while, but I can't let you go alone."

After half an hour Mrs. Walcott collapsed on the edge of a huge flat rock and made a desperate effort to regain her breath.

"Why—why didn't you tell me it was like this?" she demanded, regarding the apparently impassable jumble of boulders ahead.

"I did," said Chester. "You

wouldn't listen. These things are what looked like paving-stones from the Gorner Grat. It grows worse farther on," he added, encouragingly.

Mrs. Walcott sauntered to the edge of the precipice at the south and looked down to the morained and pot-holed glacier that lay so far below her feet. "Do you know?" she called over her shoulder, "I believe one could easily climb down to the glacier here. The face of the cliff is all broken up. It's a regular stairway."

Chester came to her side, and looked down with a laugh. "You think so, do you?" said he. "Well, don't you go swelling the graveyard in Zermatt by trying to prove it! I wouldn't climb down that place for the Koh-i-nur!" And he strolled back to the rock where he had been sitting, for his binoculars. When he turned again there was no one on the edge of the cliff.

"Maisie!" he called, in a puzzled tone, "Maisie!"

He thought she must be hiding behind a boulder. Surely she wouldn't attempt going down that precipice! Then a very thin, faint voice reached him, seemingly out of space. He rushed to the cliff's edge. There was an irregular fissure of the rocks at this point, a sort of *cheminée*, that descended for some distance, its walls broken and creviced as if by an explosion.

"For God's sake, Maisie!" cried Chester, "come back! You don't realize what you're doing! That rock may scale off any moment with your weight! Come back!"

A flushed and somewhat scared face was turned up to him. She had descended a matter of fifteen or twenty feet. "I—I think I'm growing a little frightened," she admitted, meekly. "The glacier looks so—so horribly far down. But I can't—"

There was a lurch of the blue-clad figure, a slight crash and rattle of scaling rocks, and Chester found himself half over the edge of the cliff, with strained, burning eyes and a heart that seemed to have permanently deserted its proper duties.

He caught sight of her directly. She had fallen but a few yards, and was clinging to the branches of a shrub that had found root in the crevices of the rock. How he got down to her he never knew. There was a blank of torn hands and bruised knees, of clenched teeth and straining muscles, till he woke to consciousness standing on a narrow footing of rock at the opposite side of the *cheminée* and bracing himself for a leap. He must reach a certain ledge, perhaps two feet wide, lying directly under and about ten feet below the shrub to which Maisie clung.

He braced a foot and jumped, throwing himself by necessity flat against the opposite wall of rock. It meant more bruises, but he had no thought of them. Standing on the ledge he could now reach, by stretching up his arms, nearly to her feet.

"Let yourself go," he said, quietly. "I'll hold you fast. There is no danger."

Then, in a moment, she was on the ledge beside him and looking into his eyes. He made her sit down. There was ample space, for the wall of rock sloped away backward a little from the ledge, and he took his place close to her, with an arm ready in case she should have a fit of dizziness.

She sat for some time very quietly, with her face averted. She was quite pale, but her hands and breathing were steady. Then at last she turned to him.

"You were just about in time, Teddy," she said. "The roots of that bush were pulling out one by one. I watched them give way. I should have gone down in two or three minutes more, I think." She closed a hand over one of his, and he noted, with a vague sense of surprise, that a wave of red spread over her face.

"You've saved my life, Teddy," she whispered.

"I'm not sure," said Chester. She watched his face a moment with puzzled eyes. Then she looked about her.

"Oh!" she said at last. "You—you mean that we—can't get back to

the top? You think—we're done for, Ted?"

Chester faced about and took her two hands in his. He noted, with the same vague surprise, the quick flush that rose again in her cheeks. "You're no child, Maisie," he began. "You're—I think you're the bravest girl I ever knew, and I won't beat about the bush. Yes, I believe we're done for. We can climb neither up nor down. You see that. It would do no good to shout, for the cliff would send a voice straight up into the air. It couldn't be heard ten yards away. Moreover, it's very rarely that anyone comes along the Hohthäligrat—possibly not once in a week, and I don't believe we were seen to come out. I'm afraid we're done for, Maisie dear. One night will about finish us; it grows fiercely cold here at night, you know."

She was looking away again when he finished speaking, and sat quite still for a long time, while Chester eyed, with a hopeless gaze, the cliff sides that stretched above and below them.

Then, after some minutes, she turned once more with a little smile and put her hands over his shoulders till they met and clasped behind his neck. Her eyes had a softer light than he had ever before seen in them.

"Why, then, Teddy," she said, very softly, "why, then, I think I'd like to tell you something. This is—is the last of us, isn't it? We won't wait for night to come; there's a quicker way than that. It's the time for truth-telling, Ted. I think I'd like you to know that—that I've loved you always—always! do you hear? since those days at sea two years ago. Always, Teddy— No, no; let me finish. I've thought of you night and day, all the time. I've kept a little picture of you, the one you sent me, next my heart in a locket, always; it's there now—I'll show it you presently. You know how our letters went astray; we've explained that. I thought you had thrown me over, Ted; it looked that way, and I—well, I was forced into marriage.

Girls are made to marry much oftener than you think, dear, even in America. You can't understand, because you are nothing but a man. You can't think how utterly impossible a girl's position can be made by her people if she won't marry someone they have chosen for her. You asked me the day we came to Zermatt, Teddy, if I was happy, and I lied to you—I said I was. I've never been happy, never for an instant. Oh, he wasn't a bad sort, Henry. He was just a simple, kindly, narrow-minded rancher, the best friend my father had. I thought I might be very fairly contented. There were all sorts of reasons for marrying him. And he was good to me at first. It was this trip that did all the harm. It upset him. He'd lived all his life on a ranch or in little Western towns, and the things over here went to his head. It was too sudden a change. I suppose he must always have been a bit weak. Do you know why we came here to Zermatt? To follow that dreadful creature with the yellow hair. Henry has followed her half over Europe; in fact, ever since he met her first in Paris. Oh, I don't believe he's actually unfaithful to me, but—oh, Teddy, Teddy, what a position for me to be in! I suppose these women such as she are just what would appeal to him. He always wanted me to wear chains of diamonds and red-satin gowns and all such awful things. Oh, I can't compete with the yellow-haired person, Ted! I tell you, you don't know what I have been through! I'm worn down to pure nerves, dearest; I've no control left. It has been something unspeakable. Listen. Last night, after dinner, I met—*her* in the corridor up-stairs, near our rooms. I started to pass by her, but she stood still, looking at me with a nasty little amused laugh, and called out, when I had gone some distance down the corridor, 'Be gentle with him, *ma chère*'—*ma chère*, indeed!—'be gentle with him. He and I have had a little quarrel, and he is not happy!' Well, I went on into our rooms and found Henry sitting at a

table and scowling most ferociously. I was very, very angry, and I'm afraid I told him just what I thought of him. Anyhow, he lost his temper quite, and made it very plain just where I stood in his regard and just where the Frenchwoman stood. It wasn't at all flattering to me. Ah, well, I suppose I shall just have to go on with it. There's no help—"

Then all at once she caught her breath and stared into Chester's eyes with whitening cheeks. "Go on with it?" she cried. "Why—why, there isn't any going on! This—this is the very end of—of everything! Oh, Ted, Ted, hold me tighter! I think I'm going to be afraid! I haven't been afraid at all, but it's coming on. Hold me closer, Teddy!"

Chester put his arms about her and drew her to him till he felt the quickened beating of her heart and her face lay against his.

"I think you know that I've loved you all the time," he said. "I needn't tell you that. No one could know you, dearest, without loving you, and no one who had loved you could forget. I've been trying to forget for more than a year now, but—I couldn't. It's been hard work to see you these last days and hide what I must hide—never let you know, never make a false move, or a true one, rather. If I were to live out a lifetime—twenty, thirty, forty years—it would be a poor sort of life, Maisie. I know that sounds trite, but you know it's true, so I'm not altogether sorry to finish it this way. It's a good finish, for it's with you. You see, if we should live, if we could get out of this, you would have to go back to—him, and I back to a life that I've no great love for."

The woman freed her hands and took his face between them and kissed him. The color had come back to her cheeks and her eyes glowed.

"I'm not afraid any more," she whispered; "I'm glad—now. Ah, things have been in a sad jumble, haven't they, Teddy dear? Somehow most people manage to bungle their

lives—I wonder why. But it's ending right. Isn't it curious that I'm not afraid any more? I'm quite contented and happy. Ah, for a moment it was terrible!" She sank back against the rock, clasping her hands in her lap and smiling softly.

The awful stillness of the mountains was about them, broken now and then by the soft whish of a snow-slide from across the valley, tons of snow and ice falling with a roar that the distance softened to a barely audible sigh. It was bright blue above and dazzling white beneath, with the pale sunshine that had no warmth in it flooding the face of the ragged cliff. A little scale of shingle, loosed from its mother rock, came leaping down the wall and struck beside them. And Maisie began to sing, "When We Are Married."

"Why don't you sing your line?" she demanded. "You're not paying me proper attention."

But Chester was frowning out across the *cheminée* under anxious brows, and made no reply.

"Don't you like our little song?" she asked, presently, in a very small, meek voice. She laid her hand on his torn sleeve, and Chester took it absently in his, but his eyes were on the creviced cliff.

"By Jove," he cried, "it might be done! I believe I can make it!"

"What can be done? What can you make?" she wondered, creeping to his side on her knees and following his gaze.

He slipped an arm round her and pointed excitedly with the free hand. "Do you see that little foothold across the way, two or three feet above this ledge? That's where I stood to jump across the *cheminée*. Now look below it five or six feet. There's just an apology for a ledge curving round to the face of the cliff. It's not more than ten inches wide, and God knows if it is firm, but there's a shrub growing a little distance over it. Now, a man might, with good luck, jump from here to that ledge and catch the shrub to steady himself. Once there I believe

he could manage to get up to the top. Do you see what I mean?"

But the girl caught him about the shoulders and hid her face on his breast. "Ah, no, no!" she cried. "You mustn't try it, Ted! It's impossible! No mountain goat could take such a jump. There's not one chance in a thousand that you wouldn't fall. I sha'n't let you go. Teddy, Teddy, you mustn't leave me alone!"

She turned her face up to his, and it was white with terror again. "Ted," she whispered, "if you should—should try that and be killed, I—I should go mad before I could end it. Ah, I'm not afraid to die with you, but I couldn't bear it alone. Don't go, dear; it can't be done. Aren't we both satisfied to have things end this way? Think, Teddy, of what we're going back to if you should succeed! Isn't it better this way?"

"No," cried Chester, firmly; "if there's a chance to save ourselves, it's downright suicide to stop here. I'm not over-keen on saving my own neck, but I won't lose any chance to save yours. I'm going to try that jump. Kiss me once, Maisie, and then turn round and hide your face. I will call out if I get there safely, and again if I reach the top of the cliff. After that, it won't be half an hour before I'm back again with ropes for you. Now for it! Turn about, so. You'll hear me call in a moment."

He stood up and took off his torn jacket, while the girl hid her face against the wall behind. She heard the hiss of his long breath, the crunch under foot as he leaped. Then, after what seemed an hour, a crash and rattle of falling stones, a crackle of branches—and Chester's voice, a bit breathless.

"So far so good, Maisie. I'm going to make it."

There was more rattling of loose stones, the sound of a slip now and then, of a half-repressed exclamation, and finally the voice again, far overhead.

She never stirred during the half-hour that followed, but waited crouched

against the inmost edge of the shelf, with her face hidden in her hands and all the hideous fear that had seized her earlier clutching at her heart. It seemed to her that days and nights were passing, dragging interminably. She fancied that she could see through closed lids the light wane to dusk and dark, and after an eternity, brighten again to dawn. She was chilled and cramped, but could not move hand or foot.

Then at last there were voices again far overhead. Ropes dangled by her side. Chester himself was lowered to fasten the line about her waist safely and wait while she was drawn up.

They rested half an hour at the little inn and went down to Zermatt by the electric rack-and-pinion railway. It was growing dusk as they reached the valley and crossed to the little village street. The street was full of goats homeward bound for the night, of bearded guides with edelweiss stuck in their hat-bands and coils of rope on their shoulders, of tourists lounging over the carved wood and horn and alpenstock booths.

"I suppose it is all real, Teddy," sighed the girl, "and good and natural, but—I'm afraid I'm still sitting on my little ledge up above there, waiting for—for—for something better and kinder than what's ahead of me. Back to the harness, Ted! It isn't a sweet prospect!"

"Leave him!" said Chester, quickly. "Come to me. God knows you've cause enough. Why must you ruin both our lives by staying with him when you care for me? And he—oh, leave him to his yellow-haired friend from Paris! He'd be glad enough!"

But she shook her head slowly as they went up the hotel porch. "No, Ted," she murmured. "I don't quite believe in that sort of thing—divorce—even if I could get one. You see, he hasn't yet, so far as I know, given me cause. No, I've got to go on with it; but, Teddy, the other thing would have been kinder."

The lordly hotel secretary looked

at them oddly as they came through the hall, and at their torn clothes and Chester's bruised face. He seemed about to speak, but stopped and watched them go up the stairs.

"Come up to our sitting-room," said Maisie; "I want to give you something to put on your cuts. Men never provide for such things. Your cheek is rather bad, Ted."

Mrs. Walcott's maid was in the little parlor arranging some blue field flowers in a glass. She looked up with a frightened face as the two entered.

"Where is Mr. Walcott?" asked Maisie. "Taking his walk?"

"He—he is—gone, madame," stammered the woman, "on the afternoon train." She clasped her hands nervously and sidled toward the door.

"Gone? gone where? He didn't tell me he was going anywhere," said Maisie, frowning under puzzled brows.

"If madame pleases," ventured the maid, "there is a note on the table."

Maisie took the note in her hand and looked swiftly from the maid to Mr. Chester. Her hand was unsteady. "You may go, Marie," she said.

Then, when the woman had left the room, she opened the envelope very deliberately and read the note through twice. Chester watched her face with a growing excitement. She crumpled the paper in her hand, tossed it on the floor, and went over to the window, where she stood for a long time, looking out into the growing dusk.

Someone at a neighboring window of the hotel began to sing, "When We Are Married," and a man standing below in the hotel grounds raised his head—it was Lord Feltham—and inquired, promptly, "Why, what will you do?"

"I'll be as sweet as I can be to you," sang the soprano from the window.

"I will be tender and I will be true
When I am married, sweetheart, to you."

Maisie turned back into the room with a little, soft smile.

"The harness is off, Ted," said she.

THE JOURNEY'S END

O LOVE, how many empty yesterdays
 I spent a wanderer through tangled ways,
 Forever winning to that distant place
 Wherein was hid the sweetness of your face,
 Like some far star that beckoned through the haze!

Cruel with God's great cruelty is fate.
 So long I blundered could I bid you wait?
 What token had you that I strove for this,
 Your hands to hold, your willing lips to kiss?
 What blame for both that I am come too late?

I am as one who speeds by land and sea
 To that dear room where his beloved may be,
 Eager to lay, like frankincense and myrrh,
 His love before the smile and touch of her,
 And win her tenderness and fealty—

Who comes to claim her life, and finds instead
 White lilies at her quiet feet and head,
 And shrinks aghast before the mystery
 Of her still face and eyes that do not see,
 And all the calm resistance of the dead.

Lo, I am come too late to claim you, sweet!
 Never for me the heart of you may beat—
 Only for me to stand apart and guess
 How wonderful had been your tenderness
 Had you but known the lover at your feet.

Oh, tangled ways! oh, journey long and vain!
 Why should it end beside the goal of pain?
 Let me be still, my wandering is o'er—
 I may not hope nor hasten any more;
 But ah! how much, how much I thought to gain!

MC CREA PICKERING.



A DEFINITION

LITTLE WILLIE—Papa, what is an optimist?

MR. HENNYPECK—An optimist, Willie, is a man who has never been married.

MRS. MARSDEN'S DIVORCE-PARTY

By Edward S. Van Zile

DESPITE the fact that I am somewhat phlegmatic and unimpressible by temperament, I could not help feeling hurt at an unwarrantable liberty that my divorced wife had taken with my name. One of our mutual friends had been kind enough to bestow on me at my club that afternoon a startling souvenir of my marital infelicity in the shape of an engraved invitation that he had found in his letter-box. Notwithstanding the originality of its conception, it was thoroughly *en règle* in form, and ran as follows:

Mrs. Harold Marsden
requests the pleasure of your presence
at the celebration of her divorce from
Mr. Harold Marsden,
Wednesday evening, October tenth,
at nine o'clock.

The card seemed to glare up at me mockingly from my library-table as I sat there, puffing my after-dinner cigar and striving to grasp the full significance of Elinor's daring innovation. I knew her too well, of course, to wander far in search of her dominant motive. How often had I heard her say that no woman could maintain a prominent position in society without a touch of genius! From her point of view, the highest effort of the creative mind concerned itself with novel forms of social entertainment. Her luncheon to pet cats at Newport and her famous phonograph dinner at our Madison avenue home had won for her a national reputation as an ingenious hostess.

I could realize clearly enough that Elinor had jeopardized her dearly-bought fame as a daringly clever

woman by her commonplace and conventional method of obtaining a divorce from me. The proceedings in the case had not been worthy of the exalted soul that had begotten the epoch-making idea of a luncheon for pet cats. In fact, they had borne a tiresome likeness to a hundred other legal episodes of a kindred nature, and as a divorcée Elinor had lost much of the prestige that she had gained as my ingeniously hospitable wife.

But real genius is bound to reassert itself, and Elinor, with a brilliancy of inspiration that I could not refrain from admiring, had actually seized victory from the very elements of defeat, had reestablished her reputation for originality from the real fountain-head of its decline.

"October tenth! To-day's the tenth," I soliloquized. "The decree is just a year old. It's quite like having a birthday that, somehow, belongs to somebody else. If Elinor had had a spark of human feeling in her proud heart she would have sent me a bid. I really feel that I'm part of the show—and, surely, I'm featured on the program. I wonder who'll be there—and what they'll say about me! Elinor'll look stunning, of course. By Jove, I have a good mind to put in an appearance!"

A hideous, uncanny project clutched my mind with the tentacles of a relentless devil-fish. I sipped a pony of brandy and lighted a fresh cigar in the effort to restore myself to a normal mental condition. But presently what had come to me as a wild flight of disordered fancy began to assume the shape of a practical and intensely fascinating scheme.

Presently I left the library and betook myself hurriedly to my dressing-room, ringing for my man as I passed an electric button.

"James," I said, as my valet approached me, a suggestion of wine in his flushed cheeks, "James, I am sorry to interrupt your dinner, but I want you to shave off my beard and mustache at once. Hold out your hand."

My amazed valet extended his palm perfunctorily, and I saw that his nerves were steady enough for the task before him.

"No one of her guests—not even Elinor herself—has ever seen me clean-shaven," I reflected, joyously, as James silently proceeded to remove my heavy black beard and mustache, glancing at me curiously now and again, as if he had begun to harbor suspicions of my sanity.

The ecstasy of contemplated mischief was in my soul, that exaltation of spirit which boys so often know and grown men sometimes love to recall. With my prankish felicity had come a distinct loss of dignity, and I was actually pleased to hear James ask me:

"You are going out, sir?"

"Yes, James," I answered, gaily, gazing at my smooth, beaming face in the mirror and wondering if nature had not designed me for an actor. "Yes, James, I'm going out to celebrate an anniversary. This is my—or rather our—Fourth of July, you know."

The valet paused in his manipulations and gazed at me inquiringly. He was convinced, I felt sure, that I had been drinking more wine than he had.

"Your Fourth of July?" he managed to repeat, respectfully.

"Yes, our Independence Day, you know. Come, now, hurry, James. I haven't any time to lose. It's very bad form for an unbidden guest to be late to the feast, you see."

Released from my valet's deft hands, I stood for a moment at the door of my dressing-room, carefully weighing a new thought that had come to me.

"James," I said, presently, "go into my bedroom and get me my revolver. I may be out very late."

As my man handed me the weapon he questioned my face with keen, troubled eyes.

"There's nothing wrong, Mr. Marsden?" he asked, gingerly. "Nobody's been threatenin' you?"

"No, James," I returned, lightly. "But this is the day we celebrate, you know, and I haven't any fire-crackers."

Poor fellow! As I hurried toward the hall I realized that I had left behind me a faithful servant who was sorely worried about his master's mental poise.

How could I tell James that the revolver was merely an essential part of my disguise; that I had set out for my late wife's social function in the rôle of a detective, and might be called on to show my weapon as proof of my connection with the secret service?

I was not obliged to draw my revolver, however, to gain admission to Elinor's house. In fact, the attendants in the hall and the dressing-room merely glanced at me casually and seemed to take it for granted that I was one of the invited guests.

As I removed my top-coat and hat and handed them to a servant, my high spirits suddenly deserted me. I had caught sight of many familiar faces as I mounted the stairway, and a realization of my awkward and undignified position suddenly swept over me. Here I stood an uninvited guest at a social gathering that had its origin in the pleasure a woman felt in the sundering of all the ties that once bound us together. Our Independence Day, indeed! It was hers, and hers only. I was as much out of place here as a king of England would be at a Fourth of July banquet in Boston.

Was it strange that I lingered in the upper hallway until I had awakened the distrust of a liveried footman, who had been attentively watching my exhibition of indecision? He approached me, politely enough, and said:

"Are you not going down, sir?" He was eying me closely as he spoke.

"A word in your ear, man," I remarked, desperately. "I'm a detective—here to guard the jewels, et cetera. Pass the word to the other servants, will you? I mustn't be questioned, you know, even if my actions seem to be a bit eccentric now and then. Do you understand me? There's a back stairway, of course? I'll go down that way, with your permission; and, by the way, get me a little brandy, will you? I'm not up to much to-night."

The man, evidently both puzzled and impressed by my authoritative manner, hurried into the dressing-room and returned to me at once with a liqueur-glass full of cognac. I swallowed it neat, and presently felt a return of the devil-may-care spirit that had deserted me so treacherously at a crisis.

A few moments later I stood, unregarded by the throng, in a corner of the drawing-room, watching Elinor receive her guests. What a magnificent creature she was! Tall, dark, vivacious but dignified, she impressed me as an ideal hostess, winning at that moment a social victory against heavy odds. Her black, simply made gown intensified the pure whiteness of her symmetrical neck and perfectly rounded arms. A double band of rare pearls about her throat were the only jewels she wore. The luxuriant splendor of her raven hair had been manipulated with great skill by a clever *coiffeur*. I wondered if Elinor had recalled at her toilette the fact that I had often urged her to adopt permanently this mode of dressing her hair, and that I had frequently asserted she looked more stunning in black silk and pearls than in any other costume. Bah! what silly freaks the overwrought mind is apt to indulge in at times! I was recalled to a more sensible mental attitude by scraps of conversation that forced themselves on my errant consciousness.

"She's a very stunning woman," remarked Ned Pendleton, at my

elbow; "a symphony to-night in black-and-white."

"Half-mourning, I suppose," commented a voice that I recognized as little Ted Miller's.

"Isn't it awfully jolly!" giggled a woman whose name I can't recall. "It's a sort of cross between a funeral and a coming-out party."

"Yes," put in Reggy Barnes; "I believe the orchestra is to play the 'Wedding March,' arranged as a dirge."

"Did you send her a present?" I heard a débutante asking of a young matron just behind me. "I was in an awful quandary about it."

"So was I," admitted the elder of the two. "I compromised by writing Elinor a congratulatory note and putting it into a box of flowers—forget-me-nots, you know."

"How charmingly appropriate," commented the débutante, rather satirically, I imagined.

I moved away from these chattering butterflies, conflicting emotions warring within my soul. My brain was in a whirl, and I found myself making a futile effort to identify a quotation that referred to somebody who had been butchered to make a Roman holiday. Thus engaged, I blindly jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire. I found myself wedged against a doorway by a laughing, talkative group whose faces were all well known to me.

"What has become of Harold Marsden?" asked a woman, in a stage whisper. "Do you suppose she invited him here to-night?"

"How perfectly absurd! Of course she didn't. Elinor's awfully eccentric, but she knows where to draw the line."

"I saw Harold at the club this afternoon," remarked Dick Bloomfield, who has a pretty talent for gossip. "He looked well and happy."

"I don't see how he could," snapped Mrs. Beverly Jones. "But I suppose even the worst man in the world would look happy enough at a club."

"Marsden's not so diabolical—merely human, don't you know,"

drawled Ned Pendleton, who had joined the group at the doorway. My hand jumped toward him, but I withdrew it before anyone had noticed my impulsive gesture.

"I'm sorry to hear you say that, Ned," remarked Mrs. Beverly Jones, severely. "If Harold Marsden's no worse than the general run of men, then we might as well give up the fight."

"What fight?" asked Dick Bloomfield, eagerly, but Mrs. Beverly Jones merely stared at him haughtily.

"Here comes Elinor. Hush!" cried somebody on the outskirts of the throng.

With my heart in my throat and a realization that my hands were like ice, I slipped through the doorway and hurried up-stairs, bent on a hasty exit from the house. In the upper hallway my flight—for such it was in fact—was checked by the man in livery to whom I had confided the secret of my profession. He appealed to me, greatly to my consternation, as a detective.

"Somethin' queer's goin' on, sir," he whispered to me, his hand on my arm. "Come this way, if you please."

My first impulse was to break away from his grasp and to resume my disordered flight, but the fear of exposure restrained me. To be identified down-stairs was to become the laughing-stock of the *beau monde* and a target for yellow journalism. I accompanied the flunkey, reluctantly but without open protest.

He guided me silently to the door of a suite at the end of the hallway.

"Those are Mrs. Marsden's apartments," he whispered to me. "A man—dressed just as you are—sneaked in there a moment ago and closed the door behind him. You've got your gun with you, of course. You'll find him at the jewel-case, I think. You'd better cover him as you go in."

For a moment I stood hesitant. To come uninvited to Elinor's divorce-party was bad enough, but to break forcibly into her private rooms was infinitely worse. But there stood Nemesis in livery at my very elbow,

and I was forced to act. There was no other alternative.

The flunkey possessed clairvoyant powers. As I softly opened the door to Elinor's boudoir I was confronted by a dramatic tableau. A tall man, whose evening dress was in perfect taste in every detail, stood gazing down at a casket resting on a small round table near the door to an inner room. He had turned on an electric light close at hand and had pried open the jewel-case with celerity and skill.

I closed the door behind me with great care, but he heard the click of the latch and turned toward me instantly, to look into the eye of my revolver.

"Brownlow," I said, quietly, for I recognized him at once as a man who had somewhat mysteriously forced his way into the inner circle of metropolitan society; "Brownlow, your game is up. How long have you been doing this kind of thing?"

Before the white-faced, trembling wretch could answer me, the door behind me opened and closed, and I knew that Elinor was in the room. There was no necessity for offering her an explanation of this invasion of her apartments. My outstretched revolver, Brownlow's appearance and the open jewel-casket told their story without words.

"You will let him go, sir, will you not?" said Elinor, and I knew that her gaze, like mine, was fixed on my captive's face. "The publicity that would follow this man's arrest would be very annoying to me."

"Worse than a luncheon to pet cats?" I had it on my tongue to ask, but was cool enough to refrain.

"You may go, Brownlow," I said, endeavoring to disguise my voice. "But let me warn you that you are known to the police. You'll be expelled from your clubs to-morrow. Now get out. If you're in the house five minutes from now I'll arrest you."

The tall scoundrel seemed actually to shrink out of the room. Why he closed the door behind him I don't

know. Perhaps he feared a bullet in the back, for I had turned as he began his exit and had continued to point my revolver at his retreating figure.

Elinor had sunk into a chair, pale and distraught. The light of the electric jet fell full on her upturned face. She was gazing at me fixedly.

"You are very clever," she remarked, presently. "I am much obliged to you."

"What for?" I asked, impulsively. "For being clever?"

"No, Harold." I started at the name. She had recognized my voice. But why hadn't she called me "Mr. Marsden?"

"Why are you much obliged to me—Elinor?" I faltered, taking a step toward her.

"For guarding my jewels, of course," she said, laughingly, but her merriment struck me as forced.

"I owe you an apology," I began, rather lamely.

"Is that all?" she asked, tartly. "I'll forgive you the debt. But I'm a woman—and therefore curious. Why have you come armed to my house? Won't you kindly explain the revolver? Did you suspect Brownlow?"

"No, Elinor," I answered, astonished at a feeling of light-heartedness that had come to me. "It's the Glorious Fourth, you know. Having no fire-crackers, I brought my little pistol."

"The Glorious Fourth?" she repeated, densely.

"Independence Day, I mean. That's what we're celebrating, are we not? I wasn't asked to the blow-out, but my name's down on the card, you know."

Oh, the inconsequence of a woman's mental methods! Elinor glanced up at me quizzically, a queer gleam in her splendid dark eyes.

"Why didn't you shave off your beard years ago, Harold?" she asked, irrelevantly.

"What difference would that have made?" I asked, brusquely, moving toward the outer door. Her nonsen-

sical question was so wholly out of keeping with the essentially tragic character of our rencounter that I felt it was high time to bring this absurd dialogue to an end. I still preserved a shred of dignity somewhere in my make-up.

"Are you going, Harold?" asked Elinor, quietly, but I imagined that I detected a note of suppressed excitement in her voice.

"Most assuredly," I answered, bitterly. "Mr. Harold Marsden is only an interloper in Mrs. Harold Marsden's house. The best apology that he can make for his presence is to make his exit at once, is it not?"

"But your presence here, Harold, was so opportune," remarked Elinor, musingly, flashing a glance at me that I could not interpret. "And, you know, I have always enjoyed a reputation for hospitality. It would hurt me to realize that a guest—even an uninvited guest—had run away from us before supper. And that reminds me, I must get down to my friends at once."

"Yes," I commented, satirically; "under the circumstances, one of us, at least, should display some interest in this—what shall I call it?—unique but most delightful function."

Elinor laughed aloud, this time with unaffected gaiety. She made no motion to rise, as she cried:

"Harold, I'm going to give you a compliment. Do you know, you're a revelation to me. You are very handsome—now. And forgive my surprise, you're really clever. What have you been doing for a year?"

Without premeditation I had moved toward her, and now stood gazing down into her upturned face, intoxicated by the marvelous beauty of her eloquent eyes.

"What have I been doing for a year, Elinor? I've been suffering the torments of the damned. I have been an outcast from paradise, a broken-hearted, hopeless man; regretful of the past, fearful of the future. Oh, Elinor, do you—can you pity me?"

Could I believe my sight? Were those real tears that had dimmed the

brilliancy of her eyes and moistened the satin of her upturned cheeks?

"Let me take your handkerchief, Harold," she said, extending a hand toward me. "I've lost mine."

My heart was beating like a trip-hammer in my throat. I wiped the tears from her face, and bent down and kissed her lips.

"That's actionable—isn't it?" she asked, breathlessly.

"I'll submit the question to my lawyer, Elinor, if you wish," I answered, grimly. I bent down and kissed her again. She sprang to her feet and faced me, a flush on her cheeks and a laugh in her eyes.

"You have no right to kiss me, Mr. Harold Marsden."

"Of that fact I am well aware, Mrs. Harold Marsden."

"Are you hungry, my dear?" she asked, taking my hand in hers.

"Yes—for a new life with you, Elinor."

She thrust her arm through mine and we moved toward the hall.

"Things had begun to drag a bit down-stairs, Harold," she remarked, with the fervor of an enthusiastic hostess. "I had felt a fear that

the novelty of my divorce-party would wear off too soon. But we'll change all that, won't we? After all, Harold, I believe that I'll come to think you my *chef d'œuvre* as a hostess."

"I'll take the place, Elinor," I said, as we reached the door. "But—can't you bear to regard me as an applicant for my old position?"

She put her face close to mine and kissed me, deliberately.

"I love you, Harold," she murmured. "I've always loved you—but I don't think that I ever knew it until to-night. And I'm going down-stairs to tell them so."

"You'd better let me tell them, Elinor," I suggested, cautiously, my hand on the door-knob.

Elinor laughed aloud, resting her head against my shoulder for a moment.

"Remember that this is my blow-out, Harold. And furthermore, sir, although I've discovered to-night that you are clever, don't believe for a moment that you are as clever as I am. There! That will do. No more nonsense at present, my dear boy. Come on!"



A HERETIC

"THE man is a driveling idiot," said the trust magnate.

"A plumb fool," agreed the coal baron.

"An unmitigated lunatic," assented the steel king.

"Crazy as a March hare," asseverated the great financier.

"A hopeless imbecile," asserted the power in Wall street.

"Absolutely and utterly devoid of sense," chimed in the senator.

"As brainless as a barrel," added the corporation lawyer.

"But what has he done?" asked the ordinary citizen.

The crowd was convulsed with laughter.

"Why, he says," they replied, choking and gurgling, "he actually says that money isn't everything!"

ALEX. RICKETTS.



MANY a pencil with a point is responsible for a joke without one.

FROM LOVE'S BOOK

By Elsa Barker

ANTITHESIS

TRUE Love is slow of speech and void of art,
Silence and timid tears reveal his heart;
But Shallow Love is ever eloquent
To mouth his meager passion—and depart.

THE UNDERTONE

How heavy must God's heart be as He hears
Ever the dropping, dropping of Love's tears!
Must not those bitter, murmuring waters drown
The melodies of angels in his ears?

WATERS OF PEACE

Love holds no solace half so sweet as sleep!
In those still waters I would sink me deep,
Beyond where both Desire and Dream lie dead,
And Passion and Despair forget to weep.

NARAYANA

Thy love is like deep waters all around—
Warm, waveless waters in whose brooding sound
The lone wail of the soul is lulled with dreams,
And the far clamor of the world is drowned.

ROSE OF SHIRAZ

My lover is a Mussulman, 'tis said,
Whose loves are strung like jewels on a thread.
I'd rather be the clasp that holds the string
Than shine alone upon some other head.

CHAMPIONED

Take comfort, Love! Though you may journey far,
And suffer many a strange avatar,
Some fearless poets wander down the world
Who dare to sing how sweet and pure you are.

ON VALENTINE'S DAY

LOCK your heart up well to-day,
 There's a rascal thief about;
 Throw the precious key away
 If you'd keep him out.

He's a master of deceit,
 He's a flatterer, and so
 He will call you all that's sweet—
 Which you are, I know.

All his tricks and wiles he'll try,
 Tempting you as best he can;
 He is such a shrewd and sly,
 Clever little man.

Hidden in his burglar's kit,
 Well he knows that safe in there
 Is the very key to fit—
 Sweetheart, have a care!

Yet I may as well confess:
 Love is what he calls this key,
 And his name is Cupid—yes,
 And he comes from me.

FRANK DEMPSTER SHERMAN.



LEFT IT WITH HER

MRS. RIVERS—Bridget, don't you think you'd better put a stop to that policeman's visits?

BRIDGET—I lave it with you, mum; he has persuaded me to stay another week.



MODESTY

“IT is the naked Truth,” said he.
 She answered, “Never mind;
 It will not shock my modesty,
 So long as Love is blind.”

FELIX CARMEN.

ORMSBY'S STUPIDITY

By Charles Stokes Wayne

“THAT form of cleverness which demonstrates itself in the answering of conundrums and the solving of riddles never was my long suit,” said Ormsby, stretching his legs and letting the evening paper, with its prize puzzles, drop to the floor over the arm of his big leather chair.

I beckoned a waiter and ordered two Mozambique cocktails.

“By my stupidity in that line,” Ormsby continued, lighting a cigarette, “I succeeded in making an enemy for life of one of the prettiest and brightest little women in this country.”

“Nonsense!” I exclaimed. “A bright woman would never take a matter of that kind seriously.”

“But this was a very serious matter,” he persisted. “If you have ten minutes to spare I’ll tell you about it.”

I indicated my willingness to be entertained, and Ormsby, after a moment’s hesitation, began:

“It happened last Summer up at Paul Smith’s. The first man I met when I arrived there was Phil Langley, of Chicago. First-rate fellow; lots of lucre, and in for any old thing, from cornering the corn-market to shooting craps. He was in my class at Harvard, but I hadn’t laid eyes on him for ten years. During the first five minutes of our conversation he told me he had married a California girl, and I could tell by the way he spoke of her that he was a great deal prouder of his wife than he was of his fortune.

“‘She’s just about the finest you ever saw,’ he said, and there was a tenderness in his eyes that was

pathetic. Of course, that elevated my expectations to quite an altitude, and you can imagine what she was like when I say that I wasn’t the least bit disappointed. To tell the truth, she saw my raise and went me one better. She was of the tall, slender, willowy type, with a mass of sunny hair and a pair of long-lashed, smouldering, passionate eyes that were neither blue, gray nor hazel, but a little bit of all three rolled into one.

“From the very first, though, I could see that she didn’t like me. Not that she wasn’t affable and all that, for she was, but beneath that gracious exterior I detected an innate antipathy. I felt it, and try as I would I couldn’t alter it. Not that I wished to alienate her affections from Phil—I’m the last man in the world, as you know, to try any such piratical game as that—but it rather irritated me to know that she couldn’t see my good qualities.

“Well, Langley was so confoundedly proud of her that he introduced everybody to her, and among the lot was a fellow from Boston named Abbot. I remembered having met him years before at the Tavern Club. At that time he had just got back from a trip round the world, and he was exhibiting some specimens of Burmese tattooing, with which his back was covered from shoulders to waist. He didn’t remember me, however, and so I let it go at that. He had been everywhere and stayed a long while, and he had more stories to tell than Scheherezade, and more dangers and brave deeds to prate of than Othello.

“It wasn’t long before I discovered

how things were going. Mrs. Langley became Abbot's most interested listener, and in order that he might not be interrupted they chose sequestered corners of the piazza, well-hidden nooks in the grove that is one of the features of Paul's establishment, or perhaps some quiet cove of St. Regis or Spitfire, where he would row her, while Phil was playing in a ten-dollar-limit game in some fellow's room.

"I don't want you to think that I tried to spy on her, or that I was the least bit revengeful because she was—well, let us say, indifferent to me, while she was attracted by him. I confess I felt a little sore on Phil's account, though I knew he was to blame, because, proud as he was of her, he'd rather play poker than take her rowing or driving. But I swear I wasn't cad enough to do the detective act; what I saw I saw by accident, and to tell the truth, I saw a great deal.

"After a while they got very bold about it, and they didn't seem to think anything of holding hands when they must have known no one but a blind man could help seeing.

"Then came the night when Abbot went back to Boston. She was there on the piazza to see the coach start for the station. They stood close together, whispering their good-byes until the very last call, when he scrambled up to the only seat left on top, and she waved her handkerchief until he was out of sight. And then, when she turned to go into the house, I saw tears in her eyes."

Ormsby drank his Mozambique cocktail at a gulp, lighted another cigarette, crossed his legs, and went on:

"It was two or three days after this that in walking through the grove I picked up a folded telegram. I know a discarded Western Union message isn't usually of any value, but then the fact that this had not been torn led me to believe that perhaps it had been dropped by accident. At any rate, I picked it up and read it. I

saw the name, 'Philip Langley,' and I saw that it contained only three words:

'Isle of View,'

and it was signed 'EWERS.'

"My natural supposition was that it was a code message from Phil's firm in Chicago, and fancying that Phil might at that very moment be looking for it, I put it in my pocket and walked off toward the hotel.

"As luck would have it, I found him and Mrs. Langley sitting together in the office, and without a thought of possible embarrassment for either, I pulled out the telegram, and with just a word of explanation as to how and where I had found it, I gave it to my friend. He spread it out, read it, and looked puzzled, and then I knew that I had blundered. I glanced at Mrs. Langley, and the expression she wore corroborated my worst suspicion.

"'What the deuce is it all about?' asked Phil. 'I never saw it before. Who in heaven's name is Ewers? I don't know any such person. And what sort of a place is Isle of View? Where is it? What is it?'

"'I'm sure,' I began, 'I haven't the slightest—' and then he interrupted me.

"'Oh, I see!' he exclaimed; 'it isn't for me at all. It's Mabel's. It's from Boston, and it's addressed to Mrs. Philip Langley.' And he handed it to his wife, who had sat pale, speechless and unmoving from the first.

"She took it mechanically.

"'What does it mean, Mab?' her husband asked, nonchalantly, without a shade of suspicion in his jocund voice; 'it's a conundrum to me.'

"'It's from a—a—' she began, stammering, 'a friend of Edith's in Boston. She wrote me she had asked him to wire me the name of a Summer resort on the Maine coast, and he did it.'

"'Never heard of the place,' grunted Langley, entirely unconscious of the woman's hesitation.

"I'm not clever at puzzles, as I have said, and at the moment I had not the faintest notion what the tele-

gram meant, but I was satisfied that Mrs. Langley's explanation was a fabrication, dragged up at a second's notice from her inner consciousness to serve its purpose. I had no doubt whatever that the wire coming from Boston was from Abbot, but it was not until weeks afterward that the significance of those three words dawned on me.

"From that day Mrs. Langley made no effort to disguise the loathing with which she regarded me. Even Phil, unobserving as he was, soon became conscious of this, and the situation growing uncomfortable for all three of us, I brought my Adirondack visit to an end and returned to New York."

Ormsby paused in his narration, and lifting the cocktail glass, which he had been twirling as he talked, he held it up between his eyes and the electric light.

"What a wonderfully rich color the Mozambique has!" he said, as the dregs of the mixture spread itself over the interior of the crystal. "By the way, do you know that nothing in God's world will take out its stain?"

"But the story?" I insisted. "What was the sequel? What did the telegram mean?"

"Don't you know?" he asked, as if surprised. "I thought you were cleverer than I. Don't you remember the elopement? The papers were full of it at the time; and as for the telegram—why, he who runs may read. You recall the words, don't you? *Isle of View*. Say it over aloud; run the three together and put the accent in the middle. And the signature—*Ewers!* What does it spell?"

"Ah! poor old Langley! He'll never get over it. It's darkened his life for good and all, with a stain as ineradicable as that of the Mozambique."

When I reached my rooms that night I discovered a brilliant spot on

my shirt bosom. The color was unmistakable. It was a drop of Mozambique cocktail. I forgot to tell my man he might divert the garment to his own uses, and a week later I was surprised to recognize this same article of apparel fresh from the laundry, and as immaculate as ever in its history.

"Either," I said to myself, "that Mozambique was improperly made, or my friend Ormsby deceived me."

It chanced that on the same evening I was presented to a gentleman and his wife at the Waldorf-Astoria. They were from Chicago, and their names, as my friend pronounced them, sounded unmistakably like "Mr. and Mrs. Philip Langley."

To make sure, I had him repeat them as later he and I were bowling down the Avenue in a hansom.

"That is his second wife, is it?" I asked.

"Not a bit of it! They've been married for the last five or six years, and I was best man at his wedding. He and Ormsby and I were in the same class at Harvard."

"Then he took her back after her elopement with Abbot, the Boston fellow?"

"Elopement with Abbot! What the devil are you talking about? Abbot is her brother. He lives in Boston now, I believe, but he and she both came from San Francisco originally."

"Oh," I said, "I must have got Ormsby's story a little bit mixed."

When I again met Ormsby at the club I explained to him my perplexity.

"My dear fellow," he responded, smiling patronizingly, "truth is a tyrant to whose power I refuse submission. It may be stranger than fiction, but it is also less artistic. Any fool can relate facts; but it requires a genius to weave from a scintilla of reality a fabric of brilliant and consistent romance."



AFTERWARDS

I THOUGHT I had forgotten—buried deep—
 Old joys, old memories and newer pain;
 I thought that I should never feel again
 Wild heart-throbs nor my startled pulses leap
 To hear your step, nor wake from hard-won sleep
 To knowledge of your look and voice as plain
 As in the hours they doled me loss or gain—
 I thought love died when trust I could not keep.

But when once more I chanced to see your face,
 I knew I reckoned falsely; everything
 That I thought done with hurried back to rout
 My fancied peace. Ah, fate! are time and space
 And broken faith no barriers? Must I bring
 My very life to blot this loving out?

CHARLOTTE BECKER.



SHE TOOK HIM

MISS WITHERS—Are you a marrying man?
 “What do you take me for?”
 “Oh, this is so sudden!”



SOMETHING TO LIVE FOR

FLORA—Is Lena any better to-day?
 BELLE—No; but she is more cheerful. The doctor has discovered that
 she has a new disease.



A NATURAL THING TO DO

WILLIAMSON—That messenger boy doesn't mind blowing his own
 horn.
 HENDERSON—Well, you'd hardly expect a messenger boy to run himself
 down.

“ SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER ”

By Alfred Henry Lewis

IT is weather raw and grim in Leicester Square this March afternoon in 1773. Occasional winds come bustling and force the two figures that face them to draw their cloaks the closer as they push along. Could one pry beneath that of the shorter of the two one would discover the awkward, muscular person of Doctor Oliver Goldsmith, celebrated as the author of “The Traveller” and “The Deserted Village,” and, as this sketch opens, on the brink of that most sweetly famous of all comedies, “She Stoops to Conquer.” Goldsmith is clad in what was described on the books of Foley, his tailor, as a “bloom-colored suit, with a pair of ruffles,” for which he owes that craftsman hard by nine pounds; and his face, because of his successful poems, his debts, and his comedy to be played the next evening at Covent Garden Theatre, shows a composite of pompousness, anxiety and hope, but over all that kindly, generous benevolence that is the key to his character.

Goldsmith and his comrade, Major Mills, who, with the great Johnson to give the signals, will be the leader of the claquers on the morrow, are bent for the dinner table of Joshua Reynolds. The painter's house is at hand. The dining-room windows are mellow with bright lights, and a confused roar as of voices at high pitch reaches Goldsmith and Mills where they toil in the street.

“It sounds like a game of kick-ball on a college green rather than a dinner,” observes Mills, glancing up at the brilliant windows.

“That's because Reynolds is deaf,”

responds Goldsmith, “and one must shout to make him hear. And, major, while you've met Reynolds at the Turk's Head, you tell me you've never been to his dinners?”

“I'm not even invited to-day,” says Major Mills, “save by yourself.”

“Base no alarms on that,” answers Goldsmith. “Reynolds's dinners are peculiar. All his friends are welcome, come as many as may. He asks five and dines fifteen; that is the usual course. He waits for no one, and begins at five o'clock. Once seated you must look out for yourself. Order what you will, the servants who wait on you, as it were *vi et armis*, will fetch it, or, if there be none, then something in its place. Eminently, as Beauclerk observed, ‘Reynolds's dinner table is conducted on the argument of every man for himself, as the elephant said when he danced with the sparrows.’”

The Reynolds dining-room, lofty and oaken, is lighted by a whole army corps of wax candles, some in ranks of iron, some in brass and some in silver. They burn aloft or smoke or gutter or wink with small, dim flame as pleases themselves, unheeded and unsnuffed, the servants, shiftless and undrilled, being too busy to trim them.

“And it was only last week we decided on the name,” shouts the great Samuel Johnson from his seat on the right of Miss Reynolds. “Reynolds wanted to call it ‘The Belle's Stratagem;’ I was for naming it ‘The Old House, a New Inn;’ but Goldy turned suggestion aside, and finally settled on ‘She Stoops to Conquer.’ It is a poor name, madam, but what then? Surely a man should be unfettered in

naming his own comedies and his own children."

Reynolds, silent, and indomitably regaling himself at the table's head, waves pleasant greeting with his ear-trump to Goldsmith and Major Mills as they draw up to the board. Major Mills, with a prudence essentially military, reconnoitres the guests. Aside from Miss Reynolds and the painter host, his eye takes in the rough, congested features of Dr. Johnson; the round cheeks, full brow and decidedly Irish face of Edmund Burke; the high aristocratic countenance of Horace Walpole, with its superior sneer and intolerant eyes; Bennet Langton, tall, slim, mild; Northcote, a young pupil of Reynolds, full of promise; and three or four others, not forgetting the quick, handsome David Garrick.

Those who know Reynolds only by his pictures, and have tasted his genius for color, touch and shadow with their eyes, would never guess at the mighty artist's dining-room. This last is a scene of profusion without elegance, and a coarse lack of order and fineness that would daunt any save the experienced guest. But once one knows the Reynolds way, all is ease and pleasure. One is to call for whatever one chooses; only one is to understand that one may order without getting, and get without ordering—certainty being, and not at all a disagreeable one, that one will receive a great deal.

"How of the comedy, Goldy?" asks Johnson, pausing with full mouth and working jaws, and knife and fork in air; "and how went to-day's rehearsal?"

"I will never write another play," observes Goldsmith, wearily, as he pours a glass of wine. "Sir, you know my troubles. Colman damns the thing in advance. He would not have put it on save for you."

"Aye, I know!" retorts Johnson; "I grew weary with Colman, so I saw him last January. Colman was prevailed on by a sort of force," and the elephantine doctor grins.

"Every day has borne its litter of

care and trouble," says Goldsmith; "old scenery, old costumes, the niggard everywhere; with Woodward, Gentleman Smith and Miss Abington refusing their parts, and little Catley quarreling with Miss Bulkley over the epilogue. But it will be over with another day, so let's say no more of it."

Johnson again squares his elbows and bends unctuously above the trencher, feeding audibly, while the veins of his forehead swell and his face is beaded with perspiration.

"Our philosopher seems to relish his food," whispers Walpole across table to Burke.

"There is something swinish about Johnson's dining," retorts Garrick, taking the words from Burke; "yet I would not tell him so to save Drury Lane."

"He is a foul feeder, is Johnson," observes Burke, "and it is the more strange in one of such refined excellence of mind. Mrs. Thrale tells me that he puts melted butter in his chocolate, loves lobster sauce with plum pudding, and that he once edified her guests at Streatham by eating, with the aid of his fingers alone, a whole dish of stewed carp. Ask him, Davy, what he regards as the greatest dainty."

"Dr. Johnson, I have here a Lucullus by my side," says Garrick, with much show of deference; "will you tell us what you esteem as prime dainties of the table?"

"What can be better or more luscious," responds Johnson, as one who tastes a pleasure in talking of such matters, "what is more luscious than a leg of pork boiled till the flesh drops from the bone? Or, if your palate be particular, say a veal pie with plums and sugar; or the outside cut of a salt buttock of beef?"

"But do you drink nothing?" asks Walpole, elevating his brows.

"Sir, I have not tasted wine or worse for years," answers the philosopher. "Once my word was, 'claret for boys, port for men, brandy for heroes;' but I was not man enough for port nor hero enough for brandy;

and as I did not care to be a boy with claret, I gave all up."

"Beauclerk should be here," suddenly observes Reynolds, as if to change a subject calculated to betray Johnson into vulgarities before the superfine Walpole of Strawberry Hill; "he and the Lady Di, his wife, promised to drop in. They live in the Adelphi, you know."

"We shall be glad to see Beau," responds Johnson. "Sir, Beau is a good youth, and excellently he loves letters; almost as well and with as much point as Lanky, there;" and Johnson points to Bennet Langton.

"Beauclerk loves folly better," comments Goldsmith.

"Beauclerk, sir," says Johnson, smartly—"Beauclerk, to speak with Pope, has a love of folly, but a scorn of fools; what he does shows the one; what he says, the other. He is like his great-grandfather, the second Charles. The King, however, explained the charge away when Rochester made his epigram:

'Here lies our sovereign lord, the King,
Whose word no man relies on;
Who never said a foolish thing
And never did a wise one—'

by saying that the commentary was plausible only because his deeds were those of his ministry, while his words were his own."

Thus the talk runs on; Walpole satirical, Langton thoughtful, Johnson in spirits, Garrick cautious yet slyly acrimonious, Burke amused, Mills silent, Reynolds deaf, Goldsmith gloomy and without appetite as he considers the morrow.

"Did you never think of entering politics, Doctor Johnson?" asks Walpole.

"He went far enough as a Jacobite to get a smothering pension from the Tories," whispers Garrick to Northcote, but Johnson does not hear him.

"Sir, if my life were to do over again," retorts Johnson, "if I were as young as Lanky, I might."

"When I see some drunken gamester," says Bennet Langton, with a flush, "drawing five thousand annual

pounds as a state secretary, and remember that Goldsmith got only twenty guineas for 'The Traveler,' I own that politics and parties disgust me. I want none of either."

"I confess with Langton," says Goldsmith, "that a condition of perfect political unconsciousness strikes me as a particularly happy one. I would be like that honest squire who, knowing nothing of King or Parliament, is out with his pack of hounds, between the armies, on the very morning of Edgehill. I hold him more wisely and much better employed that day than either Charles or the Earl of Essex."

"For myself," remarks Edmund Burke, "I would not live out of Parliament."

"And on my part," says Walpole, warmly, "I wouldn't live in it. I gave up my seat some years ago, and each day I rejoice. On the night of the last election I sat with my wine and my books at Strawberry Hill, and reflected on what would have been happening at that very hour had I sought my old seat. I should have been suffering the ordeal of being chaired about the streets of Lynn, upborne by an ill-ordered multitude, like a pope at a bonfire. Suppose I were to return to the House, would I hear eloquence greater than Lord Chatham's? would George Grenville cease to be the greatest bore alive?"

"No, to both questions," laughs Burke.

Walpole waves his hand delicately and with the air ineffable, as one who would say, "You agree with me, you see!" With his dark, rich dress and splendid lace, his lack of gaud or bauble, and his high, clear, well-bred face, Walpole looks the finished scholar and man of gentle taste. But his aristocracy, like all true aristocracies, sharpens into cynicism.

"What of this boy, Charlie Fox?" asks Johnson; "what, sir, of this young meteor, Lord Holland's younger son?"

"Why, sir, his friends now go so far," says Burke, "that they compare him with Julius Caesar."

"And indeed," interjects Walpole, "he is so much like Cæsar that he owes one hundred thousand pounds. He will ruin not alone Lord Holland but all his friends with his borrowings. Carlisle already pays fifteen hundred pounds in interest for him, and Crewe twelve hundred. Charlie Fox, fop, gamester, wit, orator, statesman, with a seat in the Treasury at twenty-four, and forty personal followers in the House, the terror of North, his chief, and the pet horror of the King whom he supports, can be compared to none save Cæsar, who, proscribed at eighteen, celebrated for eloquence and as an orator at twenty-two, a captain of fops and fashion as soon as he dons the toga, owed more than Crassus ever had or was squandered by Apicius."

"You give the lad a character, sir!" responds Johnson. "And is he, then, such a gamester?"

"The worst in England, sir," says Burke. "He has lost eighteen thousand pounds at Almack's in an evening. His brother Stephen, as fat and unwieldy as he is unlucky, lost thirteen thousand pounds at the same time."

"Fox is most unfortunate in his gaming," adds Walpole. "I once said that the five things most worth finding were the longitude, the philosopher's stone, the certificate of the Duchess of Kingston's first marriage, the missing books of Livy and all that Charlie Fox has lost."

"When Beauclerk comes," observes Goldsmith, "he, Langton, Major Mills and I are to go to Almack's to seek this same Charles Fox. Aside from some friendship for myself, the nephew of Lady Sarah Lennox is on the Stuart side a dim cousin of Beauclerk; and Beau declares that we'll have his aid to-morrow night to help crown my poor comedy with victory."

"And apropos of Beauclerk," observes Reynolds to Goldsmith, laying down the ear-trump into which one of his servants had roared the information, "he sends his man to say that he will not be here to-night because

of the indisposition of Lady Beauclerk, but that he'll meet you with Langton and Major Mills at Almack's at seven."

"Some more of Lady Di's temper, I fear," whispers Langton to Walpole. "The lady lives no better with Beauclerk than she did with 'Bully' Bolingbroke. I fear Beau stole a bad bargain."

"He who covets his neighbor's wife should never make a good one," is the whispered response of Walpole. Then aloud to Goldsmith: "Doctor, if you will permit my company, I will walk with you and your friends as far as Almack's."

"Reynolds," shouts Johnson as the guests get up from the table, "Davy must go to his theatre and Burke has engagements. You and I will go larking to the Pantheon, or, if you will, the masquerade at Ranelagh. Sir, it will give you a study in color; that is just what painters require. For myself, I go to give these places my countenance. Sir, I'm a great friend of public amusements; they keep folk from vice. And remember, all of us dine at the Shakespeare Tavern to-morrow at three o'clock. Covent Garden's curtain goes up at five. After dinner we will descend on Colman in a body and uphold Goldy's play. Sir," turning on poor Goldsmith, whose face is wrung with his apprehensions, "why so craven? Your comedy will succeed. Or, if you fear the defection of Woodward and the Abington, why not, even at this last hour, postpone it until next season? The rebels will learn reason by then."

"No, it shall be played to-morrow," declares Goldsmith, firmly. "Sir, I would sooner see my play damned by bad players than saved by good acting."

There is much, albeit no more than a usual activity at Almack's when Goldsmith, Langton and Major Mills arrive. Walpole is still of their company. The four find Beauclerk at a corner table in one of the ante-rooms, with George Selwyn, Lord

Carlisle and the Earl of March. About them is a fringe of dandies, heeding with all ears their utterances, for aside from the four being each of strongest fashion, March and Selwyn are peculiarly the highest quotable authority on the art of horse-racing.

Walpole, Goldsmith, Langton and Major Mills are warmly greeted. They have chairs also, and their various wants of wine or other drink are ministered to.

"Charlie Fox has not come as yet," says Beauclerk; "his brother Stephen is inside at hazard, and loser, as usual."

"There go the King's two brothers," remarks Langton, as a group of extravagantly dressed exquisites, with nod and flourish of hand to our group at the table, pass through, the two dukes being the laughing vanguard.

Walpole's eye fills with disfavor, though one of them is wedded to his niece. He shakes a dubious head.

"Everywhere 'tis like one of Shakespeare's plays," he mutters. "Flourish! Enter the Dukes of York, Gloucester, and attendants. As Lady Townsend said: 'This is the cheapest family to see and the dearest to support that ever was.'"

"How much did Colonel O'Kelly pay for Eclipse, March?" lisps one of the macaronis who surround our group; "I've ten guineas on it with Dickey here."

"One thousand guineas," says March. "A good thing for O'Kelly, too. In his last season Eclipse won twenty-five thousand pounds, and O'Kelly now has the horse at the age of nine in the stud, where he's worth a fortune."

"I know little of horses," says Langton, "yet I had the impression that Eclipse was not good blood."

"Best in the world!" declares Selwyn. "Comes straight as an arrow from Godolphin Arabian! Eclipse was never beaten; there has never been and may never be a horse to match him. For speed or distance there has been nothing his equal."

"George," laughs March, "after

all, you know more of executions than horse-races, more of Tyburn than Newmarket. At your particular and special sport of hanging malefactors, there is none whose word should have half the weight; but on horses, I fear I'm your master. Now, as to distance and endurance, Eclipse's superiority would be by no means assured. It's hardly twenty years since Dan Corker matched his brown mare—an inch under fourteen hands she was—to go to saddle three hundred miles in seventy-two successive hours. The mare won, with seven hours and forty-two minutes to spare."

"Where was this?" asks Beauclerk.

"On Newmarket Heath," replies March. "Corker's boy Jack, who weighed one pound over four stone, rode the mare, and it was no small feat of endurance for the boy; especially as only six of the three hundred miles were done at a gallop, the other two hundred and ninety-four being a hard trot. The run was from Six Mile House to the ending post on the Beacon course. I doubt if Eclipse would do the feat."

"Speaking of endurance," observes Walpole, whose sporting lore is as vast as his literary attainments, "a Miss Pond at Newmarket for one thousand guineas rode one thousand miles in one thousand successive hours on the one horse."

"And for that matter," interposes Selwyn, "while, as March says, I've studied halters rather than horses, I recall how Jenison Shafto rode fifty miles to saddle in a shadow less than one hour and fifty minutes. Also, how John Woodcock, on a bet of two thousand guineas by Shafto with Meynell, rode one hundred miles a day for twenty-nine successive days, and used but fourteen horses. The course was from Hare Park to the Ditch and round the flat on the Newmarket side."

"Recurring to Eclipse," says Beauclerk, "this Captain O'Kelly became his owner blindfold. He did not know what he was getting. The luck of such blacklegs is monstrous."

"Blackleg you may well call him!"

pipes one of the hovering dandies. "The cross he paid the champion Bill Darts to fight with Peter Corcoran of St. Giles at Epsom may well prove as much. When Darts lay down to Corcoran, he carried with him one thousand pounds of mine. I shall not soon forget Captain O'Kelly, I warrant. He pocketed over four thousand pounds by that robbery."

"Ah, here comes Fox at last!" observes Beauclerk.

Charles Fox is appareled in extremest vogue. His laces alone make one marvel. His cloak aside, he discovers himself in a peach-color suit whereat the waiting ring of dandies rave in whispers. His air is earnest, easy, and his smile is like a charm, as he receives and extends the occasion's courtesies. Walpole tenders a dainty snuff-mull with his left hand and wins the tacit encomiums of the dandies by correctly opening the same with his left forefinger. In Fox's bright eye and olive skin there glows an impalpable something to remind one of Beauclerk. It is the stamp of the kingly blood of the Stuarts, which is common to both.

"I have just left a reception in my Jerusalem chamber," laughs Fox. "My hook-nosed capitalists of St. Mary Axe have received a blow. They have loaned me I don't know how much, on the belief that the mortal life of my rotund brother Stephen would not be long. They have watched poor Ste toil pantingly up the steps of St. James from Pall Mall to Piccadilly, and their hopes were bright. I verily know I have borrowed so much as two thousand pounds for every half inch of Ste's girdle. And to-day they hear that the stork is hovering above my brother's house. The news has struck terror to the very heart of usury. Should the babe be a boy, he will come as a second Messiah, meant for the destruction of the Jews."

"But what is this rumor, Charlie," asks Selwyn, "that you are to wed an heiress and agree to lose no more than one hundred guineas at any single sitting?"

"Like Lord Holland, my father," rattles Fox, "I sincerely trust it be true; though my good parent gave as his sour reason for exultation that it would at least compel me to give up my gaming for a few days. Very ill-natured that, don't you think?" and Fox laughs merrily.

"Come hither, Charlie," interposes Beauclerk. "I would a privy word with thee."

As Beauclerk draws Fox aside, Selwyn says to Bennet Langton, "Does he not merit the poet's compliments? where he pens:

"Soft words to mollify the miser's breast,
And lull relenting Usury to rest;
Bright beams of wit to still the raging

Jew,
Teach him to dun no more and lend
anew."

Goldsmith sits somewhat apart and alone. He says nothing; his play is on his heart and leaves him no ears or eyes or words. On their side of the table March and Walpole converse in low tones.

"Does not our friend Goldsmith propose a play to-morrow?" asks March.

"It will fail," returns Walpole, subduing his voice. "I have seen a rehearsal. The plot is vulgar and the humor low. It will be hissed from the stage."

"Not if Selwyn and I can help it," retorts March. "We both like Goldsmith, and have backed his comedy to win. Sir, we shall both be there to shout encouragement all round the course."

"The play will be damned, I tell you," declares Walpole, with much heat. "I would wager my books on it; aye, and my seat at Strawberry Hill."

"Horry, if I liked a life in the country," says March, smiling, "I might book your bet. No, my friend, you dislike Goldsmith because he persists in crediting the authenticity of those Rowley verses as told by that poet boy suicide, Chatterton. You should reflect that you yourself would be doing the same were it not for the wise and reverend Gray."

"By the way, Horry," interrupts Selwyn, over the table, "Chesterfield is dying. I got a letter from Dayrolles this evening. He cannot last the week."

"Chesterfield should be well prepared," responds Walpole. "You recall how he said some time ago, 'Tyrawley and I are both dead, sir, only we do not choose to have it known.'"

"My dear Goldsmith," says Fox, returning to the poet, with the kindly Beauclerk at his elbow, "I shall do you all the good I can. I have a double pleasure in telling you that, even before Beau mentioned the subject, I had taken twenty places for tomorrow night. They shall be filled, sir. I shall bring with me nineteen of the most lordly and finished bucks of the town. And you may rely on their fervor. I have taken the precaution to wager ten guineas with each that your comedy will fail. I expect the most vociferously favorable results from it. Not one of the beggars is above winning from me, and rest secure they will all behave most stoutly for your side."

"Admirable!" observes Langton, while the pleased Goldsmith stammers his gratitude.

"Or we might bring with us a few bruisers," urges March, with a sly glance at Walpole, "to throw out all who hiss; eh, Horry?"

"It would not put my seat in peril should you do so," retorts the suave and courtly Walpole.

"And now, gentlemen," says Fox, "I will to the hazard tables. I won sixteen thousand pounds against the favorite at Newmarket, and I've had ten thousand guineas of it made into rouleaux, which I mean to double or lose this very evening."

One of the servants appears at this juncture with a great coat of rough Irish cloth that reaches from chin to heel. With it come long leathern cuffs, such as porters wear when they clean knives or varnish shoes, and a white, high-crowned hat, with a wide brim to protect the wearer's eyes from the candles, this last an

extravagant jumble of ribbons and flowers.

"You see, Sir Oliver," remarks Fox, as he dons this costume over his silks and ruffles, and at the same time notes Goldsmith staring, a bit bewildered, "you see, sir, this, as Foote says in his play, is 'my gaming dress.' We bloods of purest strain cannot afford to soil our fine feathers, even if we may our fine morals, with the sordid vices of Almack's."

It is the next afternoon—the day fateful to Goldsmith—and a goodly and obstreperous company is gathered over a three-o'clock dinner at the Shakespeare Tavern. Johnson, Reynolds, Burke, Beauclerk, Langton, Goldsmith, Garrick, Major Mills, Cumberland, Whiteford, Fitzherbert and the portly Adam Drummond—famed for his laughter, infectious and far-resounding—are about the board. Johnson is all vivacity, poor Goldsmith all gloom and unable to eat a morsel.

"Courage, mannie!" exhorts Johnson. "Sir, this is not only cowardice but scarce manners. Whatever may chance to-night at Covent Garden, it is still worth while writing a comedy to be in such brave company as this."

"In a day before I wrote either poems or comedies," remarks Goldsmith, shaking his head, "I had more ease among the beggars of Axe Lane."

"Where," says Burke, lowering his tones and addressing Beauclerk, "where is this Boswell who, I understand, so follows Johnson about?"

"I believe the little animal to be in Scotland," replies Beauclerk. "Johnson gave him an oral jacketing just before he left, as I learn from Thrale, and it drove him away for a time. It was at Streatham and before a roomful. Boswell was impertinently curious. 'Sir,' shouts the Great Cham Johnson, 'I will not thus be put to the question! 'What did you do, sir?' 'What did you say, sir?' 'What is this?' 'What is that?' Do you not consider, sir, that these are not the manners of a gentleman? I am sick

of "What?" and "Why?" "Why is a cow's tail long?" "Why is a fox's tail bushy?"

"Why, sir," says the piteous Boswell, "you are so good I venture to trouble you."

"Because I am so good, sir," roars Johnson, "is no reason why you should be so ill. Sir, you have but two topics, yourself and me, and I am sick of both."

"Egad!" concludes Beauclerk, "poor Bozzy all but expired with this tirade from his Jove. He was not the same Bozzy for days."

"I've never been honored with the sight of this Boswell," says Burke.

"Then you are like to be soon repaired of that injury," observes Bennet Langton, who sits with Burke and Beauclerk, "as Boswell is to return in a few weeks, when Johnson will ask us to stifle prejudice and make him a member of our Literary Club. I have ventured to ask Johnson what Boswell has to recommend him. He only coins a word and replies, 'Bozzy is clubable.'"

Meanwhile Johnson is holding loudly forth at his end of the table.

"Foote's puppets at the Haymarket," he declares, "playing his 'Piety in Pattens,' in his ridicule of sentimental comedy, has opened the way for Goldy's play with the town. Goldy's play is a better, worthier blow aimed at that same fustian sentimental comedy. This last has held the stage too long. Steele set it going a half-century ago, and in his day that sort of play matched with the popular taste. But, sir, the time is ripe for change; Foote's 'Piety in Pattens' shows it, and 'She Stoops to Conquer' will bring conviction. And speaking of Foote, Davy," observes Johnson, with a quizzical glance at Garrick, "that modern Aristophanes struck you smartly the other day. 'Sir,' says my lady to Foote, 'are your puppets life-size?' 'No, madam,' says Foote, 'about the size of Garrick.'" At this the burly Doctor rolls in his seat with laughter, while Garrick colors.

"Foote was not so amusing," says Garrick at last, and with an intonation something tart, "when he proposed to give an imitation of you and Goldsmith in his 'Orators.'"

"Sir, I should have cudgeled his bones," retorts Johnson, with cloudy earnestness, and his laughter dies away. "'What,' I asked of Tom Davies, 'is the price of an oak stick?' 'Sixpence,' said Tom. 'Give me leave,' I responded, 'to send your servant for a shilling one. I will have a double portion. I understand that Foote means to take me off, and I'm resolved the fellow shall not do it with impunity.' Sir, at that Foote was afraid, and I suffered none of his attacks."

"How many nights will Colman give to your comedy?" asks Reynolds of Goldsmith.

"It can only have twelve, even if successful," shouts Goldsmith into the well-known ear-trumpet. "That will close the season."

"Sir, it must succeed!" roars Johnson, bringing his hand crashing on the table. Johnson loves Goldsmith, and would give him heart. "Your play must succeed! Take my word for it, King George himself shall come to see it within ten days."

"You think well of the King, sir," observes Burke to Johnson, "since he visited you in the library at the Queen's House."

"There is no finer gentleman in England," retorts Johnson, stoutly. "No man could have made a better appearance. 'What are you writing?' asked the King. 'Sir,' I replied, 'I think I have written enough.' 'So should I think,' replied the King, 'if you had not written so well.' Could anyone frame a handsomer compliment? It was worthy of a king; it was decisive." And Johnson beams with the memory.

"What are you doing?" asks Langton of Garrick, as he observes the latter jot something in a note-book.

"Say nothing," cautions Garrick; and then, ironically: "I was merely recording that this is the four hundred and tenth time I've heard the great

Doctor Johnson tell that story." This is in the nature of an aside.

"You hold with Pope," observes Beauclerk banteringly, to Johnson, "that 'every poet is the monarch's friend.'"

"The little man of Twickenham," responds Johnson, "wrote better than that, and aimed a shrewd blow at caitiff Whigs besides, when he said:

'For colleges on bounteous kings depend,
And never rebel was to arts a friend.'"

"Is it not time we were at Covent Garden?" asks Reynolds, who has a genius to be prompt.

"I will not go with you to the theatre," says Goldsmith desperately, springing to his feet; "the strain would break me. I'll wander and walk in St. James's Park."

"Sir, cool yourself with a stroll in Pall Mall," says Johnson to Goldsmith. "Leave it to us to lift up your standards in Covent Garden. Lanky, come to the box with Burke and me; Reynolds will go to his own box. Major Mills, you will lead our forces in the pit. Beau, join yourself to your friends, the dandies, and see that they know when to applaud. You will find those birds of paradise in fullest force and feather. Garrick, there will be a place for you with Lanky, Burke and me, when you can leave Drury Lane. And last, yet not least, Cumberland, you will go with our friend Adam Drummond to an upper box, and guide his mirth aright. Foster him. He has a most valuable laugh, has Adam, like the neigh of a horse; but he knows no more than a horse when and where to bestow it."

Covent Garden is thronged; its history holds nothing like it. The poet's friends are there: Johnson, Burke and Langton; the Thrales and Baretti, Reynolds, the Bunburys and fair Mary Horneck, the Jessamy Bride; Garrick and March and Beauclerk and Selwyn, and Charles Fox, with his dandies; Cumberland, with the useful Adam Drummond; Northcote, Nugent and Major Mills, with Fitz-

herbert, Whitefoord and the phalanx of the claue. If one is to exclude George Colman, the manager, who has pledged his reputation that the play will fail, there are but three who do not wish success to Goldsmith—Walpole, the cynic; the viper, Kenrick; and the sordid Ralph Griffiths, who comes to hiss the genius of his whilom literary drudge.

It is six o'clock. The curtain goes up, and Woodward—who consents to speak the prologue, since Garrick consents to write it—clad in black mourning weeds, with handkerchief to stem the tide of tears, appears and tells of the illness of "Miss Comedy," and how she is now to be treated by a Dr. Goldsmith, and that the success of that night's efforts will decide whether the new Galen is a quack or a regular practitioner. Then begins the play.

At first the audience sits observant. As the humor of the situations and the wit of the dialogue lay siege to their fancy, folk in pit, box and gallery warm into mirth. At one of *Tony Lumpkin's* antics the great Johnson laughs. This justifies the plaudits of the pit, while Adam Drummond, from on high, with Cumberland, fairly shakes the house with roars of glee. The actors gain confidence; they do better and better, while the audience follows them with round on round of applause. So it goes. At the close of the second act victory is certain, and "She Stoops to Conquer" is already a registered success.

"That is enough, Lanky," observes Johnson. "Run to St. James's Park and bring Goldy."

Langton finds the suspense-eaten poet tossing about the Mall like a soul in torment. Langton tells of triumph, and Goldsmith all but weeps on his neck.

They return. The third act is in progress. Goldsmith goes behind the scenes and finds George Colman, whose judgment is defeated with the play's endorsement by the multitude. Colman wears a frown. As Goldsmith, all agitation, approaches, the air is split by a sharp hiss from the

pit. It falls across the overwrought poet like the lash of a coach-whip.

"What's that?" he cries.

"Heavens, doctor!" says Colman, testily, "don't start at a squib, when we've been sitting for two hours on a barrel of gunpowder."

There is a storm of approbation that beats down the solitary hiss and silences it. The poet glows; the joy of genius recompensed begins to well in his heart.

Goldsmith leaves the resentful Colman and visits the box of Reynolds. The beautiful Jessamy Bride presses his hand, and his eyes fill.

If only folk might look ahead as folk look back! What would these two see—Goldsmith and his Jessamy Bride, his one and only love? The year is to hardly end when death will have him; and to him the hiss of Kenrick, the friendship of Johnson, even the love of the Jessamy Bride, will be no more. The Jessamy Bride is to live on and on; sixty-seven years are yet to come and go for her after this night's Covent Garden curtain falls on her lover's triumph. Hazlett

will meet her, still beautiful in her old age, and write:

In her the Graces have triumphed over Time; she is of the Ninon de l'Enclos people—of the last of the immortals. I could fancy the shade of Goldsmith in the room.

The last curtain is down and the house stands roaring its approval. Walpole looks about with a critical, superior brow. "I wonder at the preference of the town," he says to Beauclerk, who has joined him. "And I do not wonder at my preference for solitude and Strawberry Hill."

"It was Ned Shuter's playing that saved it," says Goldsmith, as he meets Johnson at the door.

"Sir, your play was saved by your genius, and by that alone," retorts Johnson, with oracular severity. "For myself, I know of no other comedy for many years that has so much exhilarated an audience, that has answered so much the great end of comedy—making an audience merry—as Doctor Goldsmith's 'She Stoops to Conquer.'"



GREAT LUCK

FARMER KLABACK—Neighbor Akinside is mighty lucky with his disease.

FARMER HONK—Lucky?

"Yes; he takes dyspepsia medicine right along, and it hain't never killed him yet."



SURE ENOUGH

LITTLE WILLIE—Papa, the devil hasn't any father or mother, has he?

PAPA—No; certainly not.

"Well, then, pa, who raised the devil?"

AT COLUMBINE'S WINDOW

By Theodosia Garrison

THE moonlight to her window-sill
Clung like a tendriled vine
That trembled though the wind was still,
And through the night's decline
Stole Pierrot by the blossomed hedge
To sing to Columbine.

Beneath her lattice, where the rose
Leaned up to find her hand,
He waited in her garden-close
As some white ghost might stand;
The tinkle of his mandolin
Was wave on shell-strewn sand.

His voice was like a bird that beat
Against her latticed pane;
His mandolin held all the sweet
Insistence of the rain,
That whispers to the sleeping rose
To rise and bloom again.

*"Gold o' the moon, you are all mine, all mine
The while I touch the hair of Columbine!
Stars o' the sky, you are all mine, all mine
The while I watch the eyes of Columbine!
Rose o' the world, you are all mine, all mine
The while I taste the lips of Columbine!
But while, sweetheart, you sleep and these deny,
Nor gold nor stars nor any rose have I."*

The curtain at her window-sill
Quivered and stirred apace,
As one who felt her fingers thrill;
And through the narrow space
The voice of Columbine fell down
Like rose-leaves on his face.

*"Gold o' the moon, for him how can it be
Who stands within its glow, and will not see?
Stars o' the sky, how can he find them fair
Who will not lift his eyes to seek them there?
Rose o' the world, how may he know its power
Who will not dare the thorn to wear the flower?"*

THE SMART SET

The moonlight on her window-sill
 Bent low to lift him high;
 The roses of their tender will
 Were hands to help him by;
 The tender arms of Columbine
 Were wings that he might fly.

The sudden sun danced up the lawn,
 The wind came keen and fine;
 One singing through the hedge has gone
 Against the sunrise line,
 And on his lips, like some red rose,
 The kiss of Columbine.



NOT APPLICABLE

FATHER—You should always remember that life is what we make it.
 SPENDTHRIFT SON—Yes; but you see, dad, I don't make my own living.



A TOAST

AH, drink if ye will to a sweetheart true
 And a wife of faith undaunted;
 And drink in the praise of their fetching ways,
 To charms that have long been vaunted;
 And drink to the eyes and drink to the lips,
 Aye, drink, since drink ye must,
 But when ye've done, drink everyone
 To the girl the women trust.

Ah, drink if ye will to one whose faith
 Can last through years untroubled;
 And drink to the trust that is never marred
 Though a man's deceit be doubled;
 And drink to the songs and drink to the sighs
 Of earth and of heaven above;
 But the proudest boast is to drink a toast
 To the girl the women love.

Aye, drink to the lass who can praise the charms
 That would steal her love, could they seize him;
 And drink to the lass who will snub a man
 When she has no right to please him;
 And drink to her great, warm, honest soul,
 Aye, drink to her kiss and curl,
 For her heart's as true as the sky is blue
 Who is true to another girl.

NORA ELIZABETH BARNHART.

YOSHIDA YONE, LOVER

By Onoto Watanna

IT was five years since Yoshida Yone had come to New York.

He was essentially a son of New Japan, eager, ambitious, intensely curious and interested in all pertaining to learning and advancement. Everything in the Western world at first enthused and delighted him. He began at once to master the English language thoroughly, then to study the people. He adopted their dress, copied their mannerisms and habits, and even endured the misery of initiating himself into the mysteries of what his suite termed "barbarous food." At the end of three years he was a typical Americanized Japanese.

Now it must not be thought that Yoshida Yone was determined to adopt American ways and lay aside his old mode of living permanently. Like most Japanese who come to this country, Yone was anxious to be as nearly as possible like the people among whom he lived, even if only for a short season, but he had no fixed intention of making his home permanently in America. Only, he did not wish to leave the West until he had seen and learned all he could, and this would take time. It was part of his education, in fact, and he went at it as earnestly as he had once studied the classics in the old Imperial University of Japan.

He installed himself with his secretary, valet and personal butler in a very luxurious suite of rooms in a hotel on the Avenue, and with occasional trips to different cities, Yone for a season lived an apparently pleasant and happy life. His acquaintance was limited to a few favorite friends, for he had never lost that

retiring, somewhat unapproachable part of his character which was not Japanese pride, but rather modesty, even shyness. At all events, life ran very smoothly and evenly for Yoshida Yone.

"I ought to be very happy," he spoke aloud one day, as he looked out from his window on the ceaseless procession of carriages.

"Eh?" said the assiduous secretary, starting and turning an attentive face.

"I said," repeated Yone, with emphasis, "that I ought to be happy;" then he added, slowly, "but I am not."

The secretary permitted a polite curiosity to creep into his face, though his attitude continued gravely attentive and respectful.

"Perhaps your excellency is lonely," he suggested, gently.

"Yes," said Yone, "I am very lonely;" and he sighed.

"It is because your excellency has not married," said the secretary, in an insinuating voice.

"Married!" Yone looked at the speaker with startled eyes; "married! Why, to whom?"

He had never even thought of the subject before.

"Yes," said the secretary, "why not? Youth will otherwise glide by you unrealized. You are even now twenty-five years of age."

"Why not?" repeated Yone, softly, and stood there musing and dreaming.

The secretary permitted a short silence to ensue in order to give his master time fully to weigh the matter. Then he continued: "Your ex-

cellency should live in a house and have a family. You would not be lonely then."

"Ah," said Yone, "I had not thought of it before."

He laughed an embarrassed, pleased laugh. He was still hardly more than a boy. After a moment he said, with a joyous tremble in his voice, "Yes, yes, of course—why, of course I must marry." Then he laughed, the fancy pleased him so well.

He sat down opposite his secretary, smiling. "But whom," he said, "whom shall I marry?"

"Oh," said his secretary, reproachfully, "I will attend to all that. If you can spare me I will return to Japan, negotiate with some *nakoda* (professional matchmaker) or with the girl's parents, and will secure the best to be had."

Suddenly Yone rose to his feet and turned his back on his secretary, staring, moodily now, out of the window.

"No," he said, "I will not have such a wife. I don't like those old customs. They are barbarous. I will choose my own wife."

"Yes? Then you will go to Japan yourself?"

"No." He paused a moment, and then continued, slowly: "I shall marry an American girl. Yes, I prefer them. They are so bright, so clever, so beautiful! She shall have hair the color of the sunbeams, and eyes like yonder sky; she shall be the sun-goddess to me," he breathed.

His secretary made an impatient sound under his breath, but when Yone turned towards him his face was enigmatical and unreadable in expression. He simply bowed submissively, formally expressing a wish to serve his master the rest of his life.

The lobby, waiting-room, halls and offices of the hotel were crowded with guests eager to catch a glimpse of the naval hero who was soon to pass by in the procession. A number of knowing women had come into the hotel waiting-room at an early hour

and availed themselves of the chairs by the window. How could anyone know whether they were guests or not? In fact, a couple of them sitting close by the window had even removed their hats. The younger one leaned her head towards where the sunshine was pouring into the room, and it lighted her hair to a rich, living gold. Right at her back, staring with fascinated eyes at the mass of golden hair, done in extravagant fashion, was a little man, pale-faced, wistful-eyed, immaculately dressed in frock coat and high hat. He was a foreigner—Yoshida Yone.

There was a stir outside, a rumble and noise, and the people were cheering far down the line. A number of little boys climbed on the railings outside and shut the view from those within.

"Oh, dear! Oh, what a shame! Just look! Those horrid little wretches! The little imps!" came in a volley of angry exclamations from the disappointed and excited women grouped by the window.

The girl with the golden hair rose to her feet and then sat down again in bitter disappointment.

"I can't see a thing, mamma," she said to the other woman; "and after waiting all day like this! It's all your fault! It's a shame, and I'm so tired!"

Someone touched the older woman lightly on the arm. She turned. A small, pale, foreign gentleman stood at her elbow.

"Pardon. May I offer my assistance?"

The lady, who was large and overdressed, looked at him sharply, her eyes traveling quickly over him from head to foot. Apparently she was not displeased with the survey, for she smiled very graciously. "Why, how very kind of you, to be sure," she said.

At that the girl also turned round. She was really not at all pretty, her face large and long, and fretful in expression; but Yone saw only that the eyes were vividly blue, the complexion pink-and-white, the hair as

bright as the sun itself, and he was all cold and white in flashes.

"I have most excellent rooms overhead. Pray accept them for a short time," he said.

"Delighted!" said the mother, before the girl could open her lips to frame a denial.

They followed him out of the sitting-room; he put them in the elevator, and soon they had passed through the hall into his rooms and out on a delightful little balcony.

The acquaintance thus begun progressed rapidly, and the end of a week found the Japanese a victim of the older woman's worldly wiles and tact and of the girl's big blue eyes and bleached hair. Yone made the girl an offer of his soul, and the mother accepted it, since that meant also his gold.

The room they were sitting in was a back parlor, but it was used as sitting-room, sewing-room, dining-room and sleeping-room in one. Only large, heavy curtains separated it from the front room, which the daughter had fixed up, not inartistically, to entertain, receive and deceive their friends and guests in. They occupied these two rooms together in a second-rate boarding-house. Life was dull, melancholy, stupid. They were very poor. The mother canvassed for books, the girl helping her spasmodically when it suited her, or more often depending altogether on the mother. And now, while the mother sat patiently sewing her wedding finery, the girl was crying, crying wildly.

"Now, Mamie, pray bear up! It isn't so bad as all that. Some girls would envy you. He is really quite good-looking—for a Japanese—and so kind. Then, too, think of all it will mean to us!" she sighed.

The other groaned, hysterically. "Oh, I know, I know!" she wailed, lamenting. "You can't tell me. I am tired of it all—this trying to eke an existence out of life by our wits. And it would not have mattered whom I married—so long as he could

have saved us from the misery of it all, if it hadn't been for that other one." Muffled sobs ensued for a few minutes; then the girl continued, her voice raised wrathfully as she sat up in her petulant misery: "I tell you, mother, I never can, never will forget him! Oh, you can look like that! I know it—it was all impossible—he will marry some woman in his own set. But I can't help it—I go on loving him more and more—and hating—yes, loathing that other. *He* used to say that—that—oh, oh, oh!" She had flung herself full length across the couch again, only to spring up in a moment. "And now to have to sell myself—" she was hissing the words between her chattering teeth, for the room was cold and she had been trying on dresses all the morning—"yes, to sell myself," she repeated, "to him! —a little, brown, ugly manikin like him, when with all my heart and life and soul I love that other!"

"That other is impossible for you," said her mother, bitterly.

"Yes, yes, I know. He even told me so. And just think, mamma, if I had had a fair chance, if I had met him as other girls will, he might have married me!"

"Oh, come now, Mamie, you know he never would. See how lovely this lace falls. Mr. Yoshida is very generous. He must have spent a mint on your trousseau, my dear."

But the girl was back on the couch, sobbing brokenly.

"There, there," urged the mother, soothingly.

"Mamma, I detest him!"

"He is awfully kind."

"When he touches me I could scratch him, kill him—as perhaps I shall some day!"

"He's so gentle, and doesn't thrust himself on you."

"I hate the sight of him—a *Japanese*!"

"Now that's foolish ignorance. Everyone knows that the Japanese——"

There was a tap on the door. The girl sat up quickly, then rushed be-

hind a screen. But it was only a dirty maid, who handed a letter into the room. The girl took it from the mother, but at sight of the writing threw it down on the table with an ugly expression on her face. "He's always writing! Makes me sick!"

"See what he says, dear," her mother suggested, mildly, and the girl broke the seal and read:

"My Sun-Goddess—Come and see you again, you say? I shall be delightful!" The girl sneered, and muttered, "'Delightful!' Idiot!"

"He means 'delighted,'" her mother interposed, gently.

The girl finished the letter: "'I will come at two of the clock.'"

"Two! Mercy!" She looked quickly at the clock. "It's half-after now. I must dress."

The mother had risen to her feet, a sickening fear tugging at her heart-strings. She went to the curtains dividing the two rooms and drew them apart.

The man was standing cold and still, his face livid and ghastly, his hands clenched, his thin lips parched and dry. He had grown old suddenly.

The woman shrieked and almost fainted. The girl rushed to her, and seeing the man, seized the situation at a glance. The slovenly maid, whom they bullied, tyrannized over and quarreled with constantly, had forgotten to announce him. He had heard all. A savage joy flamed in the girl. She faced him with half-closed, defiant eyes, eyes that smiled cruelly.

There was not a word spoken by any of them, for the mother was too stunned to recover her terrified senses in time to restrain him. He found his way blindly to the door and out into the street.

Late that night Yoshida Yone dressed himself in the richest and rarest of Japanese-silk *hakatas*. Then he searched deep in the huge trunk for something hidden at the bottom. He drew it out and looked at it steadily. It was cold and gleam-

ing. Its handle was all gold and ivory, of wonderful workmanship. On the blade was the family name—one of the oldest and bravest in Japan. Yone himself had been taught the *Samourai* art with the sword. This was a sword he held now, an old-fashioned, rare, priceless sword. It had been in the family hundreds and hundreds of years. He ran his hand up and down the blade, caressing it—then of a sudden he raised it and laid it against his neck.

He began pressing it into the side, gently at first, so that it was a mere pin prick that started the blood, which dripped slowly down and down the deeper and harder he pressed. Yone shuddered and groaned, which was not at all right or correct. Alas! his hand had lost the *Samourai* cunning, and life was not taken so easily. And also he had lost the invincible endurance of his forefathers. He was not dying as became one of his family and nation—intrepidly, fearlessly, bravely. In this great Western world he had become poisoned with a dread of death, and this dread began to mingle with his repugnance of the terrible pain that now beset him. He tried to draw the sword out, but his arm had grown weak; he tried to call, but his voice failed him. Then he sank down.

A bell-boy with a white, terrified face rushed pell-mell down the stairs of the hotel the next morning and up to the clerk's desk.

"Someone has murdered Mr. Yoshida!" he cried, shrilly. "I took him water this morning, and he is lying all cut up to pieces in his blood!"

Yone was dreaming. It seemed to him that he had sunk downward into immeasurable depths of space. A terrible blankness and numbness paralyzed him, save where an unending pain throbbed and pounded and beat in the side of his neck and head. The pain never ceased, was dull, excruciating, killing. But of a sudden it seemed that a breath of perfume strangely familiar and dear was wafted to him, stole into his

senses, possessed him. He was conscious of a presence, a sweet breathing, delightful presence, leaning over him, touching, soothing him, and then slowly all the pain died away. Yone saw a vision, and over his weary brain swept a sense of infinite peace and rest. And the vision he saw was a woman's face! To his poor, fevered mind it was an angel's. It was as pale and small and sweet and gentle and motherly, as consoling and loving as the face of Kwannon, the sweet goddess of mercy. In the long, dark eyes he saw the invitation to rest; the gentle mouth was moulded to comfort, the soft, slim hands to soothe and caress. It was a face familiar, and inexpressibly dear to the sick, fever-wrought, pain-wracked man, for it was the face of one belonging to the mother country, a Japanese girl's sweet face! Back to his mind drifted the old dream days that had seemed so far away as to have withered and died. Once more he was back among the scenes of his boyhood; the perfume-laden fields thrilled him with their sweetness, the soft, glad winds caressed and called to him, the dance of the sun on the waters, the glow of the heavens and the tinted fields, and far off in the distance the sinuous, symmetrical grace of the snow-clad Fujiyama. It was all part of and belonged to the vision of the Japanese girl with the little mother-face. And then she removed her hand from his head and he felt her gliding, fading from him. With a rush all the agony and pain and longing surged back. He sat up in bed, shading his eyes with his hands, and called out to her, called with such piercing yearning and entreaty that she returned quickly, and again he felt the light touch of her hand on his brow. His wistful eyes beseeched her not to leave him.

"Sleep," she said, gently; "sleep, sleep," and she spoke in the soft accents of the home tongue!

His feeble hands tried to draw hers to his lips. She saw his intent, and smiled softly, soothingly.

"You are the moon-goddess!"

he breathed. "All the gods bless you!"

A little tremulous smile faltered in her eyes and then flickered away. She understood. He was lonely, as she had been for many weary months now, and he was—oh, so infinitely glad to hear his native speech once more. But he was a nobleman of wealth and power, and she but a poor little hospital nurse.

It was a month later. The tiniest nurse in all that big hospital came softly down the wide staircase, her delightful little nose buried in a huge bunch of early Spring blossoms.

The pale young man waiting in the nurse's private reception-room for visitors thought he read her answer in her shining eyes, and gladness trembled in his own eyes, on his lips and in his heart.

She inquired with extravagant solicitude after his health, as he had been her patient. "You are feeling better to-day?"

The young man ignored her inquiry as to his health, but took her two little hands and held them closely in his own. "*Yuki-san*," he said, with eager earnestness, "for the time of this life and the next, and as many after that as may come, will you be my wife, and take me for your husband?"

"But your health!" she said, distressedly, trying vainly to withdraw her hands; "you did not answer as to that."

"Do you not wish to go back to Japan, *Yuki-san*?" he asked, with reproach in his voice.

She caught her breath with an inward sob. "Ah, I have saved through many months for that," she said.

He laughed joyously. "And I have sufficient for a thousand such little maidens."

"But I am not so little, *ani-san*," she denied, valiantly.

Again he laughed, and she went daringly a little nearer to him.

"You shall not call me *ani-san*," he said, softly.

"No? That is the most enduring word in the language," she breathed.

"Nay; it means only brother."

"And——"

"There is another dearer."

"Ah, what is it? I know none dearer."

"*Otto!*" (husband) he whispered; and she did not deny him.



IN COURT

WHEN Cupid prosecutes a cause
 Before the court of reason,
 The way he waives aside the laws
 Of commonwealths is treason;
 And e'en uncommon wealth he'll face—
 A fellow much in favor;
 For poverty he'll urge the case
 Without a qualm or quaver.

Though many causes Cupid wins,
 He never figures gainer;
 To love of love his faith he pins,
 And asks no big retainer.
 In fact, it may be said that he
 For love within a cottage
 Will ever make his strongest plea,
 And asks no "mess of pottage."

And yet, if one should seek a heart
 Without true love's petition
 On which to base his cause, in part,
 He'll ne'er condone omission.
 For when he's tricked by scheme so base
 He'd scarcely be love's saint if
 He did not straightway move the case
 Dismissed at cost of plaintiff.

ROY FARRELL GREENE.



THE REASON

"WHAT caused Cranksmith to attempt suicide?"
 "Oh, he was beaten by himself at a game of solitaire."



AS a rule, the plainer a theorem in geometry is to a woman, the plainer she is.

THE LITTLE GIRL IN CAMPANIA

By Gerald Livingstone

"O-OH!" cried the marquise, in a shocked whisper. "Oh, how dare you, Sire! How dare you!" and she quivered with righteous rage—at least it looked like righteous rage.

"I didn't," said the King.

"You tried to," she insisted, quivering again.

"I meant," said the King, "that I didn't dare—not in my right mind—it was a momentary madness."

"Oh," said the marquise, coldly.

"You see," proceeded his Majesty, scowling at a beribboned officer who inadvertently peeped into the retreat, "you're—you're such an unapproachable sort of person, such a church portal graystone saint, you carry your nose—I mean your chin—so high in the air! Why, bless my soul! I'd as soon think of going out in the sculpture gallery and trying to kiss the Pallas Athene or the Venus di Milo—that is, of course, in a calm frame of mind. Just now that cursed music yonder set me off—that and other things. I've been wanting to kiss you for so long! Come, now, you'll have to forgive me. After all," he went on, querulously, "what the dev—what in the world's the good of being a king if you can't kiss people? There's a sort of inherent right to it. Moreover, there are reasons in this particular case that—that you don't know anything about."

The marquise sniffed and waved her big white fan. Another beribboned officer peeped into the alcove and said "Oh!" and backed out, while the King made remarks under his breath.

"I can't see," said the marquise,

presently, in a tone of plaintive reflection, "I can't see why men want to—to do those—things."

"Swear?" inquired the King.

"No," said the lady, shortly.

"Interrupt?" he ventured.

"No."

"Oh," said the King.

Then, presently: "Do they, all of them?"

"Of course they do," said the marquise, with some sharpness; "all of them."

"Shocking bounders!" murmured his Majesty.

"Though why," she went on, pensively, "I can't imagine."

"Shall I tell you why?" he asked.

"I can give you some very excellent reasons."

The marquise raised her big white fan once more. "You needn't trouble," she said, haughtily.

"Oh, very well, then," sighed his Majesty, "I won't."

The marquise closed the fan with a snap. "You needn't be nasty about it," she said.

No more officers with ribboned breasts and dragging sabres came to interrupt. The palms overhead swayed a little, the breath of roses stirred abroad, the orchestra out in the ball-room began to play something strange and Hungarian, something with a queer, breath-catching tempo, with low, trembling chords.

"What did you mean, Sire," began the marquise, after a long time, "what did you mean by saying a little while ago that there were—were reasons that I didn't know anything about? What reasons can there be?"

The King moved uneasily in his

seat, and something came for a moment into his face, lining it, making it haggard. Then he laughed and made a little bow.

"You are the most beautiful woman in Europe," said he. "At least they all say so. Isn't that reason enough? Who wouldn't want to kiss the most beautiful woman in Europe?"

"Tell me the reason, Sire," said the marquise, unsmiling.

Something came again into the King's face. He bent over and laid hold of the end of the big white fan that the lady held and looked into her eyes—they were blue, purple, like Russian violets. The eyes closed for an instant.

"A long time ago," said his Majesty, softly, "years ago, before ever I was a king, when I was only the younger brother of the Crown Prince, I spent a Summer down south of Vienna, in Campania. Do you know where Campania is, marquise?"

"Yes," said the marquise, touching the flowers at her bosom and bending her face over them, "yes, I know where Campania is."

"I was visiting the Grand Duke," continued his Majesty; "I went for some shooting, but—I fell in love, marquise."

"That," murmured the lady, her face low over the flowers, "that is no strange thing. Why, even I have fallen in love—and you, Sire—do you know what they call you over Europe? The royal lover. I have heard tales of you in Paris and in Vienna and Baden. How many times have you fallen in love, *mon Roi*?"

"Once," said the King, stroking the soft plumes of the big white fan, "once, and it must last me always. The Princess Adela had a music teacher—an Austrian, I believe—a poor devil who wrote operas that no one would publish or produce. He lived in the little town that sits by the Schloss gates, and he had—he had a daughter, marquise."

"Oh," said the lady, coldly, and turned away her face; "a peasant-girl flirtation? And what has this to do with me, Sire?"

"That," said the King, "comes later. Am I tiring you? They say," he went on, gently, "that you are the most beautiful woman in Europe. Will you forgive me if I question it? I think that somewhere—the good God knows where—there is a lovelier. You are very cold and proud and regal, and you know your power. She was not cold, and she was neither proud nor regal. She knew neither her power nor her beauty, marquise, for she was very young, a child almost, but she won all the love I have to give, and somewhere she is holding it to-day. She didn't know who I was, that I was a prince; she thought me only a traveler. We used to walk in the forest and sit by a little trout brook, where the fish play about and jump for flies. She had eyes like—like yours, my lady, great purple eyes, and she had hair that turned to copper in the sunlight. I used to coax her into the sun so that I might watch it glitter. And she'd the sweetest, loveliest smile that ever was lost from heaven, and a high little nose that turned up the very least in the world, and the curve of her cheek was like . . . Ah, well, I lived at the gates of Paradise for six little weeks."

"And then?" said the marquise, sharply. "Then you came away, and it was all over, wasn't it? You made her love you—she was a child, you say; then you just left her to her loneliness and sleepless nights and her agony of hopeless pain." She caught her breath quickly, and the flowers at her bosom quivered and heaved. "Ah, you men!" she cried. "Every pretty girl is something to play with and flatter and kiss, isn't she? Something to love through a week for her eyes or her hair, and then—to leave, carrying away everything that makes her life bright, everything that makes sunshine and joy! What is a broken heart or two? Oh, aren't you proud, Sire, at the conquests you've made? Never mind the little girl down in Campania. Aren't you proud to have taken the light out of all her life?"

But the King raised his head, till

she saw his face, and faltered and stopped.

"I went back, my lady," said he. "There was a dreadful scene about it, but I bolted and went back. Be a little sorry for me, won't you?—she wasn't there. She and her father had disappeared utterly, and I have never been able to trace them; I don't know where she is. She may have married someone of rank, possibly, for her extraordinary beauty, or she may be—she may be—dead."

The marquise raised the big white fan once more and waved it before her face. "But I, *mon Roi*?" she questioned. "Your little love story is entertaining, though a bit sad, yet how does it touch me—what you tried to do?"

"You look like her," said the King, simply. "You might be her elder sister; you've her eyes and her hair and her mouth—when you don't smile. You haven't her smile; yours is colder, prouder. But you've her way of walking and of carrying your head. I—I wanted to—to kiss you and pretend I was kissing her again. Do you see? It isn't flattering, is it? It isn't very personal, but you see—it's been six years now, with never a day that wasn't an agony of hopeless love, nor a night that wasn't half sleeplessness and half dreams of her, so that when you came to us from Paris, a month ago, it was—it was almost as if she had come, though she was a music teacher's daughter and you the widow of a marquis. I—I wanted to take your hands and hold them at my breast and kiss your lips, just once, the way I kissed her the last time in our forest path when I gave her the little gold locket with the royal arms on it, and she wondered what the arms meant, and promised to wear the locket always. I think it would help me to endure things a little more

easily. I'm going to be married to the Bavarian Princess in two months, marquise."

The lady's face was low over the orchids at her breast again, and the orchids rose and fell. Out in the ball-room the orchestra was playing "The River of Love."

"Will it help you, *mon Roi*," she asked, presently, "if I let you kiss me—once? For I think I shall. I am a widow, Sire, and you are bound to no one—yet. And I think I know of no love that is greater or sadder than yours. See, it has made me weep—a little—for sympathy."

She rose to her feet, and the King rose with her. His face was strangely young and eager and boyish. There was a flush on his cheeks and a queer light in his eyes. Then he took her hands—they shook a little in his—and bent over her and kissed her lips, once. The face of the marquise was white.

"Will you leave me now, please?" she begged. "I want to be alone. Send someone for me, presently. Oh, and never stop loving the little girl in Campania! She'd be happy if she knew—happy! Yes, yes, you must stop when you're married—but not quite, oh, not quite, *mon Roi*. Go, please, go!"

When he had gone the marquise sat for a long time with her hands covering her beautiful face. And the orchids rose and fell. Then, presently, she pulled at the diamond chain that passed over her shoulders and down into the bosom of her gown, and drew from her bosom a little gold locket with a shield of many quarterings engraved on it. She kissed the locket over and over again, and held it against her cheek. And after a time she slipped it back in her bosom and sat very quietly waiting for the officer whom the King should send to her.

HOW, INDEED!

SHE (*sentimentally*)—If the moon could only talk, what tales it could tell!
 He (*ravaged by jealousy*)—How do you know?

JACK KISSED HER

JACK—don't you envy him?—kissed her
 While taking a walk in the square—
 So sweet she, he couldn't resist her.
 And ought she, you fancy, to care?
 And should she be mad as a hatter?
 Or should she have given it back?
 Or should she pass over the matter,
 And say: "Oh, 'twas Jack; only Jack!"

Is the hue of her cheeks indication
 Of furious anger, or not?
 Or due to some slight irritation
 O'er choosing so public a spot?
 Were she kissed in the hall, would she mildly
 Protest: "Please be good—there's papa!"
 And is she now speeding on, wildly,
 To seek her protecting mamma?

Is Jack to be blamed for his action?
 Are you holding him deep in disgrace?
 Supposing he saw a distraction
 Of "Try, if you like," on her face!
 I'll add, as the close of my ditty,
 Ere spinsters regard her as lost,
 And gossips deplore: "What a pity!"
 That Jack—clever Jack—was Jack Frost!

EDWIN L. SABIN.



IT ALL DEPENDS

JAGGLES—Don't you think it is good proof that a man is in love with his wife when he sends her a valentine?

WAGGLES—Before I answer that question I should want to see the valentine.



CUPID'S BOW

WHEN Marinda smiles, I've come to know
 By the curve of her lips—such a little thing—
 Cupid is getting a string on his bow,
 And Marinda is getting her beau on a string!

UN AMOUR D'ENFANT

Par André Theuriet

LE père de Lulu, qui est fonctionnaire, a obtenu son changement. La famille va quitter Marly pour résider dans une petite ville de l'Est, tout là-bas, près de la frontière. Comme ce changement est non seulement un avancement, mais un retour au pays d'origine, on procède joyeusement aux préparatifs du départ. Déjà les meubles sont emballés, et des déménageurs les transportent sur leur dos dans la longue voiture jaune qui stationne devant la porte. Le parquet est jonché de vieux papiers, l'escalier est semé de brins de paille. Au milieu de l'appartement à moitié vide, Monsieur Lulu est désorienté. Il ne sait pas au juste ce que c'est que ce grand voyage dont tout le monde parle tant, mais il souffre d'être arraché à ses chères habitudes; le geste brutal et les voix rudes des déménageurs l'effarouchent, et il va se réfugier chez ses voisins les vignerons d'en face, où il s'attend à recevoir les consolations de sa petite amie Rosine. Rosine reste invisible; il la cherche partout, dans le fournil, dans la chambre haute; il l'appelle, pas de réponse. Il la trouve enfin, blottie dans un coin de la remise, l'air maussade, les yeux fixés sur la longue voiture de déménagement, qu'on aperçoit à travers le porche béant de la cour. Lulu veut câliner son amie; mais elle le repousse et se renferme dans un silence boudeur. Étonné de cet accueil insolite, Monsieur Lulu s'ingénie à proposer d'alléchantes parties de jeu. La petite est sourde à ses propos et à ses questions. À la fin, ses lèvres fermées par une

moue chagrine se desserrent pourtant, et elle murmure:

"À quoi bon? puisque tu vas t'en aller."

Lulu ne considère pas ce départ comme un événement fâcheux. Dans son gros égoïsme de garçon, il ne comprend rien à la bouderie de Rosine.

"Bête," réplique-t-il, "qu'est-ce que ça fait? Je reviendrai."

Mais l'enfant hoche incrédulement la tête et continue à fixer ses yeux d'un bleu noir sur la longue voiture jaune où les meubles s'enfourment et disparaissent.

"Non, non," soupire-t-elle.

"Si fait," affirme Monsieur Lulu, "je reviendrai quand je serai grand, et nous nous marierons."

Tout de même on est parti, un matin, d'abord pour Paris, où l'on a séjourné à l'hôtel. De cette station dans la capitale, Lulu ne se rappelle que les pains mollets de la table d'hôte et une belle pyramide de fraises qu'une femme portait dans une jatte, au coin de la Place Vendôme. Le surlendemain, toute la famille s'est installée dans le coupé de la diligence Lafitte et Caillard, et le voyage a été long, très long. Pendant le trajet, Monsieur Lulu a mangé, et dormi; il n'a eu d'autres distractions que de contempler à travers les glaces la route monotone où les arbres de bordure avaient l'air de fuir devant la diligence; les vastes plaines de la Brie, où les blés étaient coupés et où l'on apercevait de loin en loin un parc à moutons avec la maison roulante du berger; la croupe fumante des chevaux, sur laquelle dansait, comme un nain fantasque, la mèche

sautillante du fouet manié par le postillon.

Enfin, au milieu d'un après-midi de septembre, par une pluie battante, on est arrivé au galop des quatre chevaux dans la petite ville lorraine où la famille doit résider désormais. Les maisons basses aux toitures de tuiles sont lavées par l'eau ruisselante; les arbres frissonnent sous l'averse, la chaussée ressemble à un lac boueux d'où les sabots des chevaux font jaillir de limoneuses éclaboussures.

Malgré l'ondée, la maman a mis la tête à la portière pour respirer l'air natal. L'aspect du pays où elle a passé sa jeunesse la défatigue et la ragailardit. Elle reconnaît les maisons et nomme les gens au passage. Tout à coup, au moment où la diligence s'arrête devant l'Hôtel du Cygne, elle soulève Lulu dans ses bras et lui dit:

"Tiens, regarde ton grand-père qui nous attend!"

Lulu écarquille les yeux et voit sous le porche de l'hôtel un homme grisonnant, à la taille haute et droite, au teint fleuri, aux lèvres et aux joues rasées. Sous la casquette de cuir qui le coiffe, ses yeux ronds et clairs comme ceux d'un bouvreuil, son grand nez aquilin, sa bouche gourmande, tous ses traits sont empreints d'une joyeuse bonhomie, et Monsieur Lulu lui trouve très bon air.

Une minute après, il est dans les bras de bon-papa et, sous les parapluies où l'eau gicle, on s'achemine vers le logis des grands-parents, où l'on doit camper en attendant qu'on trouve un appartement et que les meubles y soient casés.

Le grand-père demeure dans une vieille maison, au-dessus de la boutique d'un chapelier. Dès la première inspection, Monsieur Lulu est enchanté de son nouveau gîte. Le mobilier vieillot de chaque pièce récrée ses yeux investigateurs et démesurément ouverts. Dans la cuisine enfumée, des lithographies coloriées reproduisent des scènes de la vie de Napoléon. La salle à manger est tapissée d'un papier à grisaille où se déroulent les dramatiques épisodes de la retraite de Russie,

et ce décor martial, où grouillent des Cosaques au bonnet fourré et de vieux grognards se battant parmi des plaines de neige, est pour l'enfant un émouvant spectacle aux cent actes divers. Chaque matin, avant le dîner, il se fait expliquer un panneau de tapisserie, par le grand-père qui a servi dans les dragons pendant les dernières années de l'Empire.

Il y a aussi, dans l'une des chambres à coucher, au-dessus d'une antique bergère en velours d'Utrecht, deux portraits d'ancêtres, devant lesquels Lulu fait d'amusantes stations contemplatives. L'un représente un homme encore vert sous des cheveux poudrés. Cravaté de dentelle, vêtu d'un habit bleu à la française et d'un gilet à basques flottantes, il a le teint coloré, les yeux rieurs et la bouche gourmande du grand-père. Dans l'autre s'étale, avec sa robe à ramages, ses blondes jaunies et sa coiffure noire en fanchon, une dame assez fraîche, au long nez aquilin et aux lèvres pincées. Elle tient dans une de ses mains une tabatière et regarde les gens d'un œil sévère. On a dit à Lulu que c'était le papa et la maman de son grand-père, et il s'étonne de les voir si jeunes, quand bon-papa, lui, est déjà si vieux. Il se délecte à les contempler dans leurs habits à l'ancienne mode, qui sont autrement pimpants et jolis que les vêtements sombres et sobres portés par ses parents aux jours de cérémonie.

Cette première quinzaine, passée au logis du grand-père, est pour Lulu un intermède très doux. Son père et sa mère, affairés à leur déménagement, n'ont pas le loisir de s'occuper de lui. Il a la bride sur le cou et emploie des matinées entières à rêvasser sur une galerie intérieure qui domine la cour. Il écoute le pépiement des moineaux sur les chéneaux du toit, les sonneries argentines de l'église Saint-Antoine, et se poulèche à la perspective des friandises que le grand-papa rapportera à midi, pour le dessert. Pourtant, quand il a entendu à satiété la retraite de Russie, commentée d'après le papier de tapisserie de la salle à manger, il commence à se trouver

à l'étroit dans les pièces trop étroites et trop closes, dont la grand'mère ferme hermétiquement les fenêtres par peur des mouches. Le grand air lui manque et, peu à peu, il regrette les spacieuses allées du jardin de Marly, les treilles lourdes de raisins, le bassin plein de poissons rouges; il a la nostalgie de la cour de ses voisins, les vigneronns et des dinettes savourées en compagnie de Rosine.

Pour se distraire, il se faufile parfois dans la boutique du chapelier d'en bas. Il rôde à travers les châssis encombrés de casquettes et de chapeaux enveloppés dans des coiffes de papier bleu. Il se penche sur le comptoir, où la fille du chapelier, Lise, surveille le travail des apprenties. Cette Lise est une grande demoiselle de dix-huit ans, fraîche, souple, grassouillette, avec de luisants yeux noirs, qui aime les enfants et que divertit la précocité babillarde de Lulu. Elle le caresse, se plaît à le questionner sur la maison de Marly, sur sa petite amie Rosine. L'éloignement, cet embellisseur, a transformé pour l'enfant le village qu'il a si indifféremment quitté en un lieu paradisiaque. Il ne tarit pas sur les beautés de son ancienne résidence, sur les délices du logis des vigneronns et sur la gentillesse de la petite Rose. Il ne rêve plus que de reprendre la diligence et de retourner à Marly. Moitié par bonté d'âme, moitié par amusement, la rieuse fille du chapelier se plaît à compatir aux regrets et à flatter les illusions de Lulu.

"Sais-tu?" lui dit-elle un jour; "je ferai le voyage avec toi et, sans en parler à personne, nous partirons pour Marly."

"Oh! oui, Lise," s'écrie l'enfant enthousiasmé, "allons-nous-en tous les deux. Je te conduirai chez Rosine, tu verras comme c'est joli, là-bas, comme ça sent bon, le pain chaud dans la chambre à four, et quelle bonne galette on y mange! Quand partons-nous?"

"Ah! dame," répond la malicieuse fille, "il me faut le temps de préparer mes affaires. Quand ma caisse sera prête, je te le préviendrai."

Depuis que ce projet secret existe entre Lise et lui: son imagination flambe et l'impatience le dévore. Chaque matin, il est pendu aux jupes de la fille du chapelier et murmure:

"Es-tu bientôt prête? Sera-ce pour aujourd'hui?"

"Pour aujourd'hui, non. Il faut d'abord que je retienne nos places. Mais ça ne tardera pas."

Enfin, mise au pied du mur par l'enfant, qui ne lui laisse plus de répit, elle se décide à lui dire:

"Eh bien! nous partirons demain. Viens me prendre au coup de dix heures du matin."

Lulu croit dur comme fer à ce voyage. Il ne lui est pas venu un moment à l'esprit que Lise puisse le tromper. Le lendemain, à dix heures, il descend, un peu pâle, mais très résolu, dans la boutique, et chuchote à l'oreille de Lise:

"Il est l'heure. Viens-tu?"

"Tout de suite," réplique-t-elle en souriant; "je n'ai plus qu'à mettre mon chapeau. Va m'attendre dans l'escalier."

Lulu va s'asseoir docilement sur une marche de l'escalier et attend sa compagne. Il attend une heure, deux heures. Personne! Il l'aurait attendue plus longtemps encore si, à midi sonnant, son grand-père ne l'avait trouvé, assis sur sa marche, les coudes aux genoux et les poings dans les yeux.

"Que fais-tu là, drôle?" demande l'aïeul.

"J'attends Lise, qui doit venir me prendre."

"Lise? . . . Elle est partie en vendanges avec son père. Je viens de les rencontrer sur la route. Al-lons, dépêche-toi, il est l'heure de la soupe."

Mais Lulu éclate en sanglots. Il ne veut ni manger ni être consolé. Cette perfidie de femme le révolte. L'idée que la jeune fille s'est vilainement moquée de lui, lui crève le cœur.

Et, depuis, il n'a jamais pardonné à Lise de lui avoir causé cette première et navrante déception.

GOLD AND DROSS

IF she laugh with you, jest with you, then
 You are one of a hundred men
 Gladdened and cheered awhile
 With the trifling coin of a smile—
 The cheap little coin and small
 She may toss to any and all.

If she sigh with you, weep with you, then
 She has chosen the man from men
 To lay at his hand the whole
 Vast wealth of an untouched soul,
 To prove you how small the spent,
 Poor gifts of her merriment.

JOHN WINWOOD.



MORE THAN ENOUGH

THE POET—Is there a poets' club in New York?
 THE CRITIC—Plenty of them. Nearly every editor keeps one.



IT WOULD COST SOMETHING TO SEE HIM

MATINÉE GIRL—I must see you at any cost.
 ACTOR—All right; buy a ticket for our next performance.



ENGLISH AS SHE IS SPOKE

“ANYTHING on hand for to-night?”
 “Yes, I have a little scheme on foot.”



AT A WOMAN'S CLUB

A DISCUSSION ON THE PLEASANTEST FORM OF DEATH

MISS HOMELY—As for myself, I should prefer to be kissed to death.
 AN UNKIND MEMBER—But where could you get an executioner?

EVOLUTION

HE, not to miss an instant bliss
That sorely tempted, stole a kiss.
"You are a thief!" the fair girl cried.
"That surely cannot be denied!"
"A thief?" said he, in voice infirm.
"Sweet maid, you use too harsh a term."
"Not so," replied the girl he kissed.
"A thief takes little—hardly missed;
Th' embezzler makes of trust a breach,
And gathers everything in reach;
The financier takes such amount
That you nor I could ever count.
You are a thief for what you've done,
Only a thief—you took but one!"
On that he plunged in crime anew,
Quickly to an embezzler grew,
And now is far advanced, I fear,
Into a lucky financier.

GEORGE BIRDSEYE.



THE GOOD THING

DE GARRY—Why is he making love to his broker's daughter?
MERRITT—He thinks that if they were married her father would give him different tips.



ABSENCE OF MIND

CHARLIE CLUBMAN—I am rather afraid of that Miss Brighteye. It is reported that she is a mind-reader.
SNEERINGTON—Well, really, I don't see what *you* have to be afraid of!



A BOOMERANG

MADGE—Was she sorry she gave him a penny for his thoughts?
MARJORIE—I should say she was. He bought her a valentine with it.

FORGOTTEN

OVER the hills all day, all day,
The fleets of the white clouds trail away;
The winds are sharp and the dry twigs sway.

But down where the waters crisp and shine
No sail has come—no human sign.

With gold and crimson the slopes are strewn
From the ravished treasure-house of June;
The sunlight flies from the spectre moon.

Yea, and the drifting leaves would fill
The footway leading up the hill.

And unto God above I cry:
“Wilt Thou blot out before mine eye
The little path that he came by?”

I listen. 'Neath the lonely eaves
The night-wind strews the air with leaves.

THOMAS WALSH.



MENTAL EXERCISE

BERENICE—What is the nature of this brain work Cholly has undertaken?

HORTENSE—He has made his valet take a back seat, and he thinks for himself what suits he will wear each day.



AND HE SUPPLIED THE WANT

HE—Don't you think this bench would be more comfortable if it had a back?

SHE—I think arms would make it just as comfortable.



A CROKINOLE party—the frog.

“BESPOKE”

By Mary Sibyl Holbrook

“AND what,” asked Louise, looking up from her hammock with languid amusement at her lover's hero-worship, “will this little tin god on wheels think of *me*?”

Tony Barron returned her glance with one wholly serious. “Oh, he'll like you awfully, of course. He can't help it. I shouldn't wonder, Louise, if he turned sweet on you himself.”

“Suppose, Tony, I should turn sweet on him. He's worth it?”

“Rather! He's ten times the fellow I am. You really should have waited.” His confident smile spoke the possessor.

Louise mused. “I like his picture, immensely. He's not as good-looking as—persons I could name, but he has distinction.”

“Lots of it—” Tony's bright assent was no whit clouded by jealousy—“and tin to match.”

A more direct ray shot from the girl's lazy eyes. The next moment she surveyed the Mediterranean. “Has he? I don't remember that qualification.”

“Oh, yes, any amount. So he doesn't need to be good-looking. As it is, the girls follow thick in his footsteps. Now, if your young man weren't an Adonis he'd have no show at all.” Tony's smile was winning enough to bear out his words, and Louise gave him her hand, approvingly. Seeing over her shoulder the postman come up the drive, he dropped it rather suddenly. She turned for the reason.

“Oh, Tony, dear, get them, please.”

He was half-way already, and after sorting out his share and Louise's,

came back with the letters to the hammock.

“Here's one from Mat now. Talk of angels!” he cried, gaily.

“Well? Does he get to Nice this week, or next? Is your hero properly impatient to come, see and conquer?”

Tony smiled at her catechism, but read to the end, before looking up to say: “He'll be here Saturday. Sick to death of Switzerland, he says, and of trippers, and longs for real Europeans. We're the people for him, Louise. Eh? He'll put up as near ‘Les Cerises’ as he can, and be here most of the time. I'll telegraph him at once.”

“What's your other one, Tony? Mine are the merest notes.”

“Oh, that! It's from mother. Perhaps I'd better glance at it before I go.”

“We'll have the phaëton, and I'll drive down with you,” said Louise, with more animation than she had before shown.

Coming out again with parasol and gloves, she met Tony striding up with an uncomfortable frown. Louise hoped he was not going to find fault; she detested being censured.

“Just hear this! Sit down a moment, dear. I'll have to consult you before we start. ‘Helen and Dan and the dear little girls are coming to us for two weeks, on the way home from Bombay. They touch at Marseilles, and have arranged to come up from there to Paris, as I am so eager to see them all, and Bermuda is the next post. Now Helen will be dreadfully disappointed not to see you, and considering it is six years since she went out, I hope you will feel like spending the short time of her stay

with your own family, especially as you are to have all the rest of the Autumn with Louise. You used to be fond of Paris, and many of the same people are still here. We shall welcome you warmly, dear Tony, and I sincerely hope you will let nothing keep you away.' Aren't people's parents simply insatiable, Louise? There I was with them in London all May and June, and in Paris all July, and here's Mat coming, and the polo match and all—to say nothing of leaving you!"

Louise was thoughtful. She looked annoyed, as in effect she was. No one who has not been engaged knows what it is to have the man summoned by his family. She resented the reproach implied in "all the rest of the Autumn with Louise." Still, she seldom confessed to resentment—or, indeed, to anything else.

"Well, what do you say?" Tony's impatience finally brought out.

"It depends. How soon is Mrs. Parmiter expected in Paris? Does your mother say?"

"Yes, somewhere about the fourteenth, which is next Tuesday—tantalizingly soon after Mat comes."

"And you're asked to stay the whole two weeks?"

"Yes. When you think of it, that's not so much for a sister one's not seen in years. It's only that leaving just now is so awkward."

"Still, Tony, it's less awkward than if Mat Blaney were to be your guest; and after all, as you say, a fortnight's not long when he is booked for two or three months here."

"Subtraction leaves some six weeks at least. Yes, you're right. Suppose I tell Mat, though, and give him a chance to stop where he is till I'm back?"

"You say he's bored with Switzerland?"

"He might use up the two weeks somewhere on the way."

"On the whole, Tony, I'd let him come, now that he has set a date himself."

He turned to her with an odd look.

"And let him make love to you for

two whole weeks, without the shadow of a rival?" His light tone and searching eyes were a contradiction. She laughed, faintly.

"You forget I'm bespoke, Tony, dear. It's not good taste to talk of my being made love to."

Her dusky beauty against the parasol's red background dazzled him. "Forgive me, Louise, and please—a kiss. There's no one in sight. Thank you, dearest! You won't forget you're bespoke, will you?"

Then they drove off to send the telegrams, and duly on the following Saturday Matthew Blaney was registered at the "Sur Mer," and on the following Monday Tony Barron waved adieu to his sweetheart and his friend from the noon train out of Nice, Paris-bound.

Left to themselves the sweetheart and the friend lost no time in getting on together. The acquaintance that under a third pair of eyes might never have ripened, matured rapidly. Louise found Matthew Blaney all his stanch admirer, Tony, had predicted. He was more a man of the world than Tony, and Louise relished the change. Where Tony had been boyishly content to beguile the still, bright days with wandering in the groves around "Les Cerises," or haunting Louise's hammock on the veranda, reading to her—with interruptions—Matthew, unable to offer this style of variation, bestirred himself to find entertainment for the girl. Louise was too indolent for any active sports, but she let Mat drive her to the tournaments, the golf links and the bathing beach, where she would sit in the easy superiority of her perfect clothes, watching amusedly the absurd travesties adopted by her sex in behalf of exercise.

Occasionally Mat prevailed on her to ride. Her London habit may have helped out his pleading. It was tan, and the color, as well as the severe lines, turned her out more of a beauty than ever. On one of these occasions, as Louise and her cavalier rode into the square set for the meeting of their

party, they saw, surrounded by saddle-horses, a harnessed trap, containing the girl who had invited the others, and a man known as Patsy Bangs. The girl, Annette Roger, waved her whip to Louise, and as they reined in she explained: "My horse went lame this morning, and papa wouldn't hear of my riding a hired one, so I'm forced to this, you see. I'm going to take in a new man every two miles. Remember, Patsy, your hours are numbered."

"Please let me know at which milestone I am to be honored," Mat begged, taking out a note-book.

"The tenth out. So you'll be my fifth partner. No one can say I'm not impartial. Well, we are all here, I believe. Grace, dear, will you and Mr. Cheney lead? We don't want you all to get our dust."

Louise, as they cantered out on the green-bordered country road, was rather silent. Mat offered the customary shabby remuneration for confidences.

"My thoughts aren't worth even a penny, Mr. Blaney."

"Then you must be thinking of me."

"No, I wasn't. I was wondering if Annette Roger supposed we thought her serious."

"I plead guilty to credulity in the first degree. I thought she meant it all."

"Perhaps you were even looking forward impatiently to that tenth milestone! Oh, my veil is going to be annoying. Do you mind walking your horse a moment?"

"No, indeed," and Mat pulled in his ambitious gray. "Why don't you take the veil off and let me put it in my pocket?"

"I'm sorry to make you do that." But she began to unfasten the knot.

"No girl can *make* me do anything, Miss Townes. There, it will be all right in this pocket, won't it?"

"Yes, thank you. But you haven't cleared yourself of my charge yet."

"Oh, about the tenth milestone. I credit you with more penetration than to think me impatient for any sort of

change. I should like, as the men in novels say, to ride on in this way forever and ever." His tone was playful, but she looked pleased.

"If one must be insincere," she commented, "give me flattering insincerity."

"Thanks. I have my cue," said Mat, bowing over the saddle. "But tell me," he went on, returning to Miss Roger, "you are sure she was insincere? Now, was that flattering?—if so, to whom?"

"Oh, it was meant to soothe two or three of the men who came primarily in the hope of riding with her."

"Which two, besides myself?"

"Now that is unflattering hypocrisy."

"You're right, Miss Townes. She doesn't deserve it."

"No, it strikes me as rather cool, to ask a lot of men to ride, and then go off in a trap with the one you like best. I never go off with the man *I* like best."

"But weren't the men all paired off with special girls?"

"Oh, dear, no. Only in one or two cases where there was some special reason."

"We seem to be a couple," suggested Mat.

"Yes," Louise smiled, "we're a couple as we are."

"I like couples, don't you?"

"That greatly depends," Louise answered, "on the other half of the couple. I usually get on with myself."

"Well, you like this couple, I hope, don't you?"

"Better than some I could imagine," said Louise, pleased with her own reserve.

"For instance?"

"Myself and Mr. Patterson Thorn-dike Bangs. He's a distant cousin, and we cheerfully hate each other. But I seldom find myself with distinctly the wrong person. I'm lucky that way."

"Perhaps it's more management than luck," observed Mat, with an innocent glance at his boot heel.

"You insulting person! I should

think you would say, 'No girl can ever monopolize me.'"

"No more she can—against my will."

"Do you always know when one tries?"

"Always."

"What hopeless conceit! Now tell me, when Tony first brought you over and said he wasn't to be here, were you aware of my intention to keep you at 'Les Cerises,' away from your hotel and the people in town?"

"Perfectly aware. It was written on every feature of your face."

"And you didn't just yield like putty to my will?"

"No, indeed. That was quite conscious yielding, I assure you, Miss Townes. No putty about that."

"Well, after all, the conclusion is somewhat satisfactory, though I've discovered a new power in you."

"And that?"

"Serene rudeness, surpassing mere bad manners. You do it very well, but it must make you very nasty when you want to be."

"You still prefer the very common gift of flattering insincerity?" asked Mat.

"Oh, much! Please don't forget it."

"I shall remember," Mat declared, obediently.

"Sha'n't we ride on?" said Louise.

"We appear to have lost sight of the others."

They were starting off behind the ponies for what they thought would be their last drive, as Tony's fortnight was just up, when a letter was handed them from Tony himself. He wrote that his sister's children were ill, all three; that Mr. Parmiter's leave being limited, he had gone on; that Helen depended very much on having Tony to cheer her up and help move the children about; in short, that his two weeks must at least repeat themselves. Meantime, he hoped Louise was doing the honors properly, and that both of them were missing him, excruciatingly.

Neither Louise nor Matthew Blaney looked flatteringly forlorn as they

drove idly on, along the sea-girt boulevard, discussing Tony's letter. It was directed to Mat, but giving it hardly more than the glance necessary to grasp its burden, he had passed it to Louise. As she read he studied her face, slightly wondering to see no frown of disappointment at Tony's delay. An ugly possibility seized his heart and wrenched it. She had never before stood to the loyal Mat for anything but Tony Barron's fiancée, queenly among women, as Tony deserved. Now she struck him as peculiarly detached. It was undoubtedly a pose of hers—a dozen trivialities confirmed it. But what if it should be more than a pose? He put the thought away with a sort of shamed haste, and turned toward the sea. She followed his eyes.

"I would my love and I were sailing!" she hummed, as they watched the yachts skim by.

"All right. Let's go this afternoon. Will four o'clock do? Why didn't you mention it before?"

"How could I have known you would be vain enough to take me up?"

"You could hardly overcredit my vanity, Miss Townes."

"Ah, but for that—" she looked at him to measure her own audacity—"you would have to be more than vain."

"Tell me, what should I have to be for that?" His zest was aroused, and his eyes told of resolution to chase the game to cover. She fluttered with the reins. The absence of her usual composure struck him. Her reply, however, was a return to the trivial.

"Oh, all sorts of things," and she smiled approval of the pursuit.

"What sorts? I would really like to know just what qualities of disposition that very natural reply of mine argues to you. It declares me vain, and more than vain—'all sorts of things.' That's a somewhat general, not to say feminine, accusation. I don't see how, Miss Louise, you can really expect me to defend myself against you."

"Then suppose you don't try," she said, lightly, gathering up the reins

to urge the ponies. "Isn't it more chivalrous to admit the charge as it stands?"

"Oh, of course. Only my curiosity has been cruelly roused. Let me guess. Does one of the 'things' begin with a 'd'?"

"No, none that I had wit enough to make. Do you know you make me think of Tony now? He's always teasing."

Mat sobered. "I'm glad I make you think of Tony," he said, slowly, almost sternly. The ugly black doubt popped up again, goblin-like.

"Why, pray? It's no great pleasure to me, I assure you. An absent lover has no excuse for being. He's impossible. He simply doesn't exist."

Mat was puzzled. Could this be real indifference, or was it but a feint suggested by the girl's pride to hide a very genuine soreness? He decided to treat the denunciation of Tony playfully.

"I really must lecture you, Miss Louise. I protest you're unfair to the poor boy. A man who is coddling sick nieces can't be expected to write love-letters."

"He wrote you," was her cold comment.

"Ah, but that's another pair of sleeves. Tony doesn't write love-letters to me." Mat beamed triumph, but it was short. Louise's next words brought extinction.

"I don't think he'll ever write any more to me," she said, without passion, but with a grim calm that made her companion shudder.

"Oh, my dear young woman," he exclaimed, "you surely can't mean you'll throw Barron over completely for not writing you in—how long is it?—three days?"

"Five," she corrected, still unmoved; "and that's not all. He would never have gone in the first place, if he had really cared for me. I wish I'd ended things then and there, only—" her eyes and hands again lost their concentration. Her calm surface was roiled, like a wood-spring cut by a dipper's edge.

"Oh, you can't really mean that.

Don't say it," Mat pleaded. "Only what?"

A beautiful woman dares much forbidden her plainer sister. She looked full at him.

"Only," she said, looking away, "you would not have stayed."

For a moment she feared having chosen, after all, the wrong shaft, Matthew Blaney sat so petrified, staring at the ponies' ears. He was mapping out a campaign, a game of chess, of checkmate. The crooked black goblin had suddenly come out to stay, but as suddenly it was transformed into a shining princess. The art of the girl, the fearlessness of her, dazzled him, awoke his admiration; but her tenderness kindled no spark of desire.

He had, as the hero-worshiping Tony had intimated, been wooed by more than one woman. Seldom as suddenly as this or, he was convinced, as insincerely. He had not had time to see it coming, though of course Louise had had it in mind when she declared Tony lost past redemption from her good graces. Mat smiled to himself at the stage-rapidity with which she had swept from situation to situation, from disclaiming Tony to claiming him. She had spared him the stigma of a "cutting-out." Where there was no ownership there could be no theft. Her first step, accordingly, had been to dissolve ownership.

Then the ungallantry of his silence struck him, and with a final resolution he swung round to Louise and put his hand on hers. They had turned off the main road; trees hedged them in on both sides, and the ponies were taking the up-slope leisurely.

"No, I would not have stayed," Mat said, brimmingly. "And I would not have been here now—nor here—nor here." He put his arms about her and kissed her lips.

Tony Barron's second fortnight was only half over, yet he was tearing back to Nice on the *Petite Vitesse*. Two letters from Nice had reached him, and his mother, his sister, even the sweet little nieces whose pathetic

worship of him in their illness Tony had grown to return, all were left behind without a pang. He had no room for more than one feeling—a raging grief that flamed in every chamber of his heart.

The journey was a nightmare. He could not read or nap or eat, or even smoke. The people in the train maddened him; the landscape was no more soothing. All he could do was to read and re-read the two letters that had acquainted him with the sudden treachery of his two most trusted friends. These gave him no light, however. Mat's was brief and dry, with a proudly ironical implication that Louise had told him she was free before he offered her new bonds; Louise's perfectly enigmatic—she found she didn't care for him, found she could not refuse Mr. Blaney. She blamed Tony in nothing, yet neither did she seek excuse for herself. No shadow of reason could Tony, in his frantic foraging for causes, bring to light. It was utterly unnatural, unaccountable, monstrous. How could a chap like Matthew Blaney, quiet, indifferent, experienced, skeptical, so suddenly have fallen in love with a girl like Louise? Perhaps the more harrowing horn of the dilemma was: how, in return, had he made her fall in love with him? Of course, he was, as Tony had told her in the first place, ten times as much of a fellow as himself, but still not in the least the sort to captivate Louise. The implication and its bearing on the girl escaped Tony now—later it came back to him—what supreme quality had he lacked that Mat possessed? A passionate admirer of beauty, she had declared him not good-looking. She had allowed him distinction and—forthwith the rest of the conversation repeated itself, to Tony's horror. No, not that! He could not believe that of her, without more proof. He had never seen signs of such a really grasping, mercenary spirit as this would mean. No, it was all a loathsome, detestable, hideous puzzle. He must bear the journey to the end, and then perhaps some of the

baffling questions would meet their answers.

The train was nearing Nice. It slackened, and Tony started to the door, forgetting his hat-box and sticks. He dashed back again to his seat, and taking them down from the rack, he recognized Mat's gray clothes outside on the platform. All Tony's hero-worshiping love flowed back in a warm gush, and his eyes filled as Mat gripped his hand in the old, affectionate way. Neither said anything till they had despatched Tony's luggage in a station fly and set out on the road to "Les Cerises." At Mat's first brief sentence Tony stopped as if wand-struck by a magician. Then a sharp question and a more soothing reply from Mat, and again they swung into step. As they walked on Tony's eyes lost their wild stare and brimmed with excitement. He fired questions at Mat, who seemed coolly ready with return shots to lay low the other's doubts.

"Not going to marry her?" was Tony's first fierce flash. "Then why the devil did you take her away from me? I *was* going to marry her."

"That was just what I was afraid of, and I didn't intend you should," replied Mat, quietly.

"Why, pray? What business was it—?"

"My dear Tony, none, except that I selfishly wanted your wife to be a decent sort of woman. I hope to be a frequent guest at your fireside, you know—that sort of thing."

"Come now, Mat, Louise not a decent sort? I won't listen to that! You know—"

"Oh, I'll fight if you insist, but let's be clear what we're fighting about. Would you think a girl decent who was engaged to your chum, say to me, and in two weeks after meeting you, threw him over, making it extremely plain that she did this in your favor?"

"I'd like to see a girl treat you like that, Mat!"

"Well, then, you can imagine how Louise's doing just that appealed to me. What would you have done?"

Very likely you'd have rejected her with scorn, and then, if she hadn't publicly committed herself, you'd have stood by her and declined to give her away. And I, little innocent I, would have been led as a lamb to the slaughter. High ideals, Tony, chivalry and all that, are mighty fine things, but I don't see why a woman who's a sneak should be protected any more than a man."

"There you go, Mat. I tell you Louise Townes is the girl I love, and you needn't call her names before me. I'm sure you'd much better have broken my heart than hers," Tony concluded, sentimentally.

Mat had some ado to keep from laughing outright. "Don't measure everybody's heart by your own, my boy. Do you really imagine she's fallen in love with me all of a sudden, like that?"

"Why not? You're the sort of man girls do fall in love with."

"Perhaps, one or two—not a girl like Louise Townes."

Tony heard the echo of his own reasoning. "I do think it's queer, Mat," he admitted, frankly. "I've been wondering a good deal how it came about. If she cared for me—and I was pretty sure she did when I went away——"

"That's where you're wrong, Tony. She doesn't know what it is to care for anybody but herself. She likes excitement, devotion, someone to take her about and admire her clothes. You happened to fill the vacancy when you met her. Once you were gone she still needed someone. I was at hand——"

"That might excuse her flirting with you," said Tony, "but to cut me off, deliberately—no, she must really be in earnest with you, Mat!"

"Positively not."

"How do you know?" Tony stole a searching glance at him.

"Now don't make me say caddish things, Tony. There are signs. Any one with half an eye——"

"Or half your experience," interrupted Tony, slyly.

Mat rejoiced at this returning self.

"Since you say so, yes. I have observed people who were in earnest—they didn't resemble Louise."

"But that solves nothing, Mat." Tony was unwontedly logical, bent on sifting every stick and straw out of the mystery. "If she didn't love you, and only wanted someone to take her about while I was gone, what on earth was the use of such a stroke? She could have had her cake and eaten it, too."

"But it was the first she wanted to eat, and have the second left."

"Why?" pursued Tony, unflinching.

"I shall shock you, perhaps," said Mat, gravely humorous, "but I have made a discovery. Louise is twenty-eight. You must see I'm a more suitable match in point of age. My superior years are my sole vantage ground, Tony."

"You forget your superior bank-account."

Mat lightly waved his hand.

"We were speaking," he said, sweetly, "of women's hearts, where considerations of money have no place."

The sneer was subtle but penetrating. Tony had no further need to search for the key that unlocked the secret. Mat saw the certainty grip his friend. They looked each other in the eyes. There was nothing further to say.

"And the dénouement? When is that to be?" Tony asked after a pause, switching at the turf border of the path.

"The wedding? Oh, that's set for to-day four weeks."

"You'll not wait till then, surely? That's rough. But, Mat, are you sure?"

"Perfectly, my boy. I haven't a qualm. I knew you'd melt, though."

"Can't I melt you, Mat? Wasn't there any other way out of it?"

"None so good. I made up my mind in a hurry, but everything so far goes to prove I'm right. Now don't get soft, Tony, when you see her. We're almost there."

"How do you suppose she'll take

me? Good Lord, Mat, I can't see her! I know I'm a beastly coward—but I never felt a better appetite for deserting. Oh, there is the house. I suppose it is too late. Yes, there's Louise on the veranda. Mat, what if I should disgrace myself, after all?"

"You won't," smiled Mat, encouragingly. "Louise isn't the sort to move one to tears. Here she comes. Now for your iron mask!"

And here was proved the value of much-cursed conventionality. Well-bred men of to-day don't, in real life, spring at each other's throat, or drag their women-folk by the hair. So Tony, instead of shrieking in stage-fashion, "Traitor! I know you not!" calmly took Louise's outstretched hand, and remarked, "How are you, Louise?"

"Glad to see you back, Tony," was all her reply, a slight intensifying of manner, not enough to be named, her only sign of feeling the situation. Yet this man, when they had parted, had been her lover, and the two now met in the presence of the man whom, four weeks hence, she expected to be her husband. They sat down confidentially close together, and Tony was plied with questions about Paris, measles, Mrs. Parmiter's looks after six years of India, and such secular and entirely worthless details. Sangaree made a welcome break, and shortly Mat got up, declaring that he was going to celebrate Tony's return by dining with him at the hotel.

"You might invite me, too, Tony," said Louise, with playful jealousy, which she felt to be her most successful stroke yet. She watched them disappear under the limes, with an agreeable sense of having gracefully carried off a complicated and trying part. As for Tony, how well he had behaved! She wondered, could he have been so composed if he had been seriously cut up. She hoped above all things he would not want to talk it over—she abhorred explanations. No; apparently his heart was far from broken, she need not fret her conscience for him!

So conventionality tided the three over the next few days, steered them off rocks and quicksands, till they at last were really launched. Together they visited the matches and tournaments, rode and sailed together, almost as naturally and unconstrainedly as if there had never been any jar in their relations. They would spend harmonious mornings on the piazza of "Les Cerises," chatting so amiably one would really have found it hard to distinguish the jilted from the favored lover. But it was not all as easy as it appeared. Poor Tony was more than once on the brink of backsliding, and Louise, while dominated by Mat and accepting his conditions, chafed occasionally under the perpetual necessity of excursions or home-biding, *à trois*.

At last, partly in the hope of getting Mat more to herself, she set a term to her public appearance, declaring that since the invitations to the wedding were all but out, she must really go into a temporary eclipse. There was, however, to be a particularly fine cotillion at the "Sur Mer," which Tony had been asked to lead and take in hand generally, and he was insistent that Louise and Mat should make this their wind-up, if wind-up there must be. It was the very eve of the date fixed for the issue of invitations, and she at first demurred. Tony boyishly held out. "Now, don't spoil it all, Louise, just for stupid conventionality," he pleaded, reverting unconsciously to the lover. Louise noticed the familiar tone, and smiled to Mat before answering.

"Well, just for your sake, Tony, we'll make an exception. I have nothing except two or three stringy muslins to choose from, but no one will expect smartness in an approaching bride." It was Mat's compliment that she courted, but Tony's that came.

"Oh, you're smart enough in anything, Louise, and you know it. Besides, what about all those boxes that have been pitched at the house every day this week? You know you've clothes enough, if that is all."

Louise smiled indulgently and wished Mat would warm to the discussion of her gowns and her looks in them. His personal tributes, it now occurred to her, were surprisingly rare. She finished by making the appeal direct.

"Wouldn't you, Mat, prefer me to keep my trousseau frocks for later on? Won't my yellow do?"

"That fluffy one you wore to the Casino? Yes; why not? As for the new ones, though, pray don't reserve them on my account. I suppose you made them to wear, though I have no experience of such things. They may be to hang at the drawing-room windows."

"Oh, you foolish boy!" said Louise, only half-satisfied. Before Tony, Mat should really help her out better than this. She decided to abandon the question of frocks, though Tony looked eager to have it settled. He, Louise reflected, was always so appreciative of her good points and her treatment of them.

"Speaking of the drawing-room," she went on, after a scarce-felt pause, "I have some bewitching samples of curtains. Come into the house and we'll talk them over."

Tony almost forgot his grievance in his eagerness to have the dance a success. For the next week he was his old enthusiastic self, and his labor of love met its reward when the evening came, for the cotillion at its very opening, with favors and music commanded from Paris, showed easily the most desirable function thus far in the Nice season.

Louise had overcome superstition and wore one of her new gowns, a glowing pink that jaundiced all the other brunettes and faded the blondes. She was triumphant, supreme. Intoxicatingly aware of her seductive beauty, of Tony's reawakened admiration, she singled him out for privileges beyond those the host would naturally enjoy. Mat was distinctly gloomy. Twice that day he had stung her by his irony, and his subsequent attitude had hardly been that of due contrition. She was glad if

now he, in his turn, was a bit uncomfortable; it wouldn't hurt him. And Tony was so delicious, so droll, so saucy, and withal so adoring still! Something of his earlier charm penetrated the girl's thick nature. She roused herself to new effort to attract him. She succeeded, and tried the more.

After supper—which, as all Nice knew next day, was unwholesomely Parisian—they two had danced together, and at Louise's suggestion had withdrawn to a remote reception-room, where were no plants convenient for eavesdroppers and but one door, across which Tony partly drew the heavy curtain that hung in it. They had both had champagne with their oysters—and little else.

"This does seem like old times, doesn't it, darling—you don't mind my calling you that, do you? It slipped out so naturally! Now where will you sit? In this big chair? The sofa? All the better. There's room enough for me, too, isn't there?" And he laughed with rich contentment.

"More than enough," said Louise, dropping her head back on the deep cushions; "enough for two of you."

The triviality of their talk hid an undercurrent of excitement.

"Do you want two of me?" asked Tony, starting back in mock alarm. "Are you pining for Mat?"

"Mat? Hardly. Haven't you seen him glowering at me?"

"He'd glower worse, I'm afraid, if he should come in here now."

"I don't know why. We're giving him no cause to glower."

"But we might, Louise—mightn't we?"

"Possibly, if I were not Louise and you not Tony."

"And Mat—not Mat!"

"Pray stop, Tony; you sound like those fearful conundrums one remembers."

"You're the most fearful conundrum yourself that I remember. Now tell me, Louise, my girl——"

"Stop pulling at that lace, Tony—and I'm not your girl, so I can't tell you."

"Then give me a glove or something to play with—I'm nervous to-night. I haven't given dances enough lately to keep my hand in." And he jumped up for a savage turn through the room, seating himself again on the sofa, nearer Louise.

"Why need you be nervous? It's all going swimmingly. Haven't you seen it yourself? I'm wearing both gloves."

"Well, take one of them off, won't you, for me? Oh, yes, things are so-so. Everyone but Mat looked pretty happy at supper. But my plaything?"

"You may take it off yourself; I won't. Mat again! What makes you bring him in now?"

"Would you rather leave him out? Is this the way it comes, Louise?" He uncovered the girl's slim, round, cream-fleshed arm, then her long, slender white fingers. He crushed these in his warm, throbbing hands, and she smiled at him, her head thrown back.

"You beauty!" he exclaimed.

"You bad boy!" she murmured, caressingly.

His eyes were eager, his heart leaping. One hand moved up toward her shoulder, and holding the cool column of her arm, he kissed it, passionately. Suddenly he felt it drawn away—the curtain at the door had parted, and Matthew Blaney stood on the threshold.

"I'm glad to find you together," he remarked, leaning easily against the mantel; "I've been waiting for a chance like this. I have a communication of a somewhat distasteful nature to make to you."

"Hear, hear!" mocked Louise under her breath, though her eyes had a guilty look.

"This little scene only proves what I have known from the first. You do not love me, Louise. You could

hardly expect to make me believe you do, after what I have just seen. An engaged girl who is in love with her lover would hardly disappear for half an hour with another man for the purpose of letting him make a fool of himself. I can't say it is much of a blow to the lover in this case, for I have had no love of you to be wounded. I asked you to marry me because it seemed the most effective way of showing Tony the sort of girl you really are. I won't enlarge on that—you probably know yourself better than we know you—and I wish you much joy of the acquaintance. I only hope and pray that the good of the discovery is not all lost, that you have not fooled the poor boy a second time. Tony, of course, speaks for himself. I throw up my part. You can arrange any final tableau you wish. My character is at your disposal."

Louise stared, forgetting even to make the mute appeal of injured beauty. Mat took a step into the room.

"I shall mail my excuses to-night to Mrs. Townes. To-morrow, of course, we—at least I—shall be out of the way. And I think you may like your carriage at once. Let me take you down."

Louise, followed by her maid, groped through the dimly lighted sitting-room to her chamber. She stumbled against a cubical bundle near the door.

"What is that, Christine?" she asked, annoyed.

"The invitations, mademoiselle. They were left for mademoiselle to look over the addresses. To-morrow one will post them."

"No, Christine; I am not going to be married on the twenty-fifth. I—am not well, Christine."



IF women are "little cats," why are they so afraid of mice?

POLLY POWWOWS

(WITH APOLOGIES)

By J. R. Crawford

NOTE—This is based on the theory that dialogue has ceased to be an essential feature of modern fiction.

" . . .," said I, stroking the cat.

" . . .," she replied, vaguely. It was an evasion, but I decided to let it pass.

" . . .," She frowned ever so slightly. "After all," I thought, "what does it matter?" Which is almost an epigram.

" . . .," she ventured. There was nothing for it but to stroke the cat again.

" . . .," naïvely.

I kept silent.

" . . .," tapping her foot, which was a great deal, under the circumstances.

" . . .," I remarked, stepping on the cat.

" . . .!" Polly said, vexedly.

I felt I had been awkward.

" . . .," I hazarded, defensively.

" . . .," with a shrug. Polly is proud of her shrug.

" . . .," It was hardly an answer.

" . . .," Polly observed. Evidently she had not so considered it. I fear Polly when she is sarcastic.

" . . .," I said, appealingly. Polly broke a cup, thoughtfully. We were having tea.

" . . .," she replied, passing the cake. I eyed it doubtfully and then took a piece. Polly watched me with interest.

" . . .," I said, carelessly.

" . . .," she pouted, deliciously. I felt that this time I had scored. You see, she had made the cake.

" . . .," she continued, biting-ly. I have said we were taking tea.

The curate entered. On the whole, he was rather a relief.

" . . .," he remarked, with a bow.

" . . .," Polly smiled. She is always equal to emergencies, which is the eternal compensation, I suppose.

" . . .," I laughed, passing the curate my cigarette-case. He lighted one and looked pained. It was Wednesday. He smokes Wednesdays.

" . . .," I again observed, waving my cigarette.

" . . .!" snapped Polly. The observation struck me as trite. The curate smiled, indulgently. It is the license of the cloth to be indulgent.

" . . .," he responded. I stole a glance at Polly. She looked bored, which was not surprising. I never look bored—it's too common.

" . . .,"

" . . .,"

" . . .,"

I have forgotten whose turn it was next.

" . . .," I murmured. The remark was ignored.

The curate took a piece of cake. We both watched him. There was a slight pause, then he asked me for another cigarette. It was Wednesday, I reflected.

" . . .," she said. It was evident that Polly was getting irritated.

" . . .?" the curate asked, dep-

recatingly. I looked at the ceiling and smiled.

" . . .," resumed the curate, nibbling his cake with great relish.

" . . .," Polly answered, absently. I stooped and rolled up my trousers. It had begun to rain.

The curate took the hint and rose.

" . . .," I observed, holding out

my hand. Polly did not see it. I went toward the door. The curate followed me.

" . . .," said the curate; whereupon I smiled at Polly.

" . . .," she answered, picking up a book.

" . . .," said I. It was a parting shot.



A HUSBAND'S ADVICE

MRS. WITHERBY—Dear, the men have come to put in the telephone.

WITHERBY—All right. Let 'em put it in.

MRS. WITHERBY—But where do you think it would better go?

WITHERBY—I don't care. Anywhere to suit you.

MRS. WITHERBY—But where do you think would be the best place?

WITHERBY (*carefully going over the whole matter in his mind, after a moment's thought*)—I should put it back of these stairs, in the hall.

MRS. WITHERBY—Oh, dear, no. That would never do. Why, suppose burglars—

WITHERBY—You weren't thinking of putting it up-stairs, were you?

MRS. WITHERBY—Well, it would be so handy up there, and then if burglars—

WITHERBY—Nonsense!

MRS. WITHERBY—Then why don't you suggest a place?

WITHERBY (*drily*)—I have.

MRS. WITHERBY—But a *decent* place.

WITHERBY—Look here; you settle this matter yourself. I don't care where you put that telephone. You can hang it on the roof, put it in the laundry or on the front door, if you want to.

MRS. WITHERBY (*haughtily*)—There! I knew that's the way you would act. I have to decide every single thing about this house, and I'm sick and tired of having such a helpless man as you are for a husband.

WITHERBY—You ought to have married an electrician or a house-decorator. Haven't I told you what I thought?

MRS. WITHERBY—Well, why don't you think of some other place, instead of standing round like a dummy?

WITHERBY (*getting angry*)—You are a wonder! First I told you to decide the matter for yourself, and then, when you insisted on my advice, I gave it to you at once. Now you are abusing me just because I've got strength of mind enough to stick by what I said.

MRS. WITHERBY—I don't care! You are perfectly useless.

WITHERBY (*resigned*)—All right; I am. Here comes the telephone man. Say, where's the best place to put that machine?

TELEPHONE MAN—I should say, sir, in the hall, back of these stairs.

MRS. WITHERBY (*calmly*)—Of course that's the best place. But I'll know better next time than to think of consulting you about anything!

Exit WITHERBY, whistling violently.

TOM MASSON.